

ROME IN THE TEUTOBURG FOREST

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Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

ROME IN THE TEUTOBURG FOREST, by James L. Venckus, LCDR, 118 pages.

This paper examines the battle of Teutoburg (9 A.D.), its consequences on the Roman world, and the role cultural misunderstanding played on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The Roman commander's cultural misunderstanding of his enemy caused mistakes at the operational and tactical levels, while the Roman Emperor's cultural misunderstanding brought about mistakes at the strategic level and created poor policy decisions following the battle, which affected Rome like no other battle in its history. Chapter 2 examines the consequences of other Roman losses (with much higher casualties) to show how none of them carried the same impact as the Teutoburg loss. They were but temporary "setbacks", while Teutoburg was Rome's first military "defeat" in its history. The Roman direction of conquest into Germania and the image of the pre-Teutoburg Germanic barbarian (an image which changes greatly into an elevated status following the massacre) are also examined. Chapter 3 examines the commanders of both sides and the battle itself. Chapter 4 looks at the significance of this loss. This battle caused Rome to adopt its first permanent defensive boundary and set the first limit of the Roman Empire.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

In 9 A.D. Germanic “barbarians” slaughtered three Roman legions. The Germans ambushed and massacred these Romans as they marched through what the Romans believed friendly territory, at a location known as the Teutoburg Forest.¹ Eighteen thousand Romans died as a result of their commander’s mistakes.² The Roman commander, Publius Quinctilius Varus, misunderstood his Germanic enemy and the operational environment. Varus negligently assumed a lax marching order. He also failed to adjust to his situation and recognize multiple factors from terrain to weather, which negated his legions abilities and placed them in a vulnerable position, resulting in the Roman massacre.

However, Rome had suffered much greater defeats throughout its history. At Cannae in 216 B.C., Rome lost over three times the number of soldiers at Teutoburg.³ The Carthaginians under Hannibal defeated Rome at this battle, yet this only spurred Rome to destroy Carthage and continue Roman expansion through Carthaginian territory and even further into North Africa for centuries. Cannae serves as the typical Roman response to a military loss. Traditionally, when the Romans lost they returned and

¹*Teutiburgiensi saltu*- Latin used by Tacitus to describe the Teutoburg location. *Saltu* has been translated differently, some translating as forest and others as pass. Adrian Murdoch, *Rome’s Greatest Defeat* (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 111.

²Velleius Paterculus (translated by Frederick W. Shipley), *History of Rome* (London, England: Harvard University Press, 1924), 297. The Roman historian Velleius Paterculus lists three Roman legions, three cavalry divisions, and six cohorts slaughtered in the Teutoburg.

³Historian Adrian Goldsworthy listed the Roman casualties at Cannae: 45,000 infantry, 2,700 cavalry, and 18,700 captured. Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 40.

continued their path of conquest. They regrouped and acquired both the province and the people through conquest and assimilation.

This Roman mindset carried forward to their frontier policies and mirrored itself time and time again in their conquest and assimilation of provinces for over 200 years. At the battle of Carrhae 53 B.C., the Romans lost twice as many soldiers than at Teutoburg. Yet, when the Parthians destroyed these 30,000 Romans, Rome responded the same as against the Carthaginians.⁴ The Romans returned with a vengeance and continued to conquer Parthian territory expanding the Empire eastward for another 200 years.

Yet after Teutoburg in 9 A.D., Rome never acquired territory east of the Rhine, and of course this portion of Germania never became a Roman province (refer to figure 1 below). Teutoburg's true significance does not rest in the defeat itself, nor in the number of Romans killed; but in Rome's reaction, and particularly, Augustus' reaction. For the first time in Roman history, Rome established a defensive mindset. Teutoburg literally drew the limits of the Roman Empire, an Empire which before 9 A.D. held none.

⁴Approximately twenty thousand Romans were killed at Carrhae and ten thousand were captured and imprisoned for over two decades. Gareth C. Sampson, *The Defeat of Rome in the East* (Drexill Hill, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2008), 169.

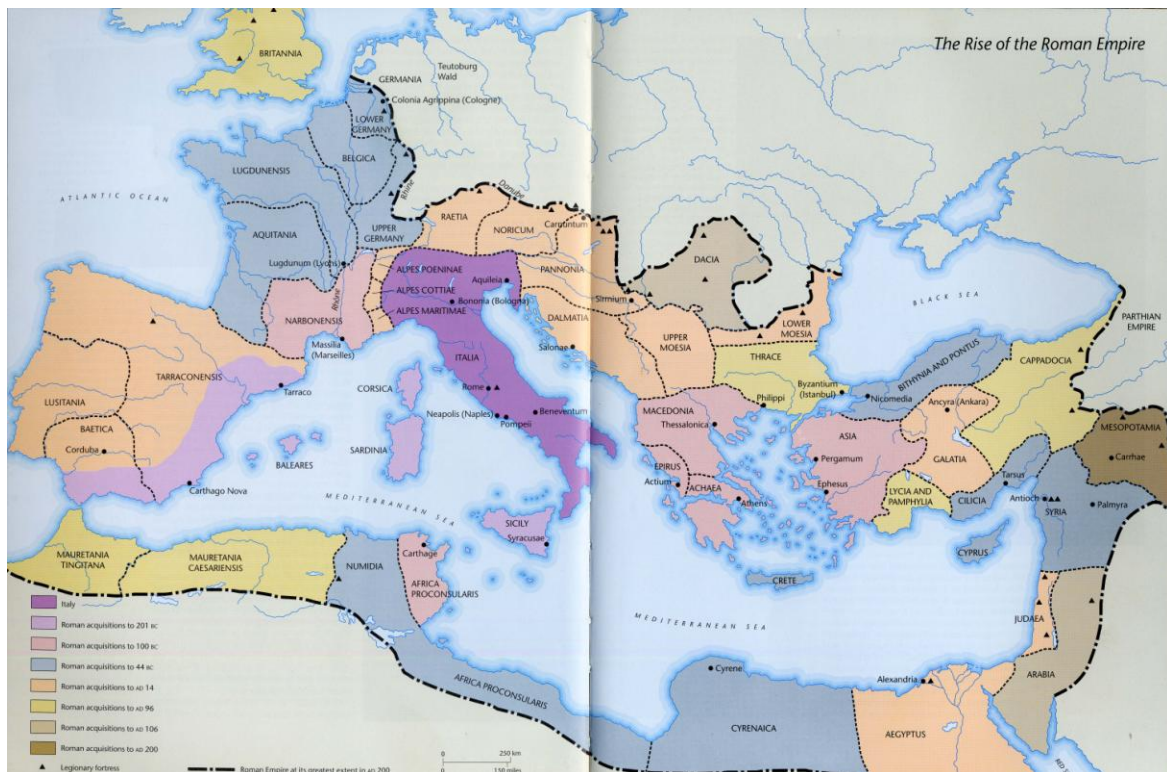


Figure 1. The Roman Empire

Source: Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 14-15.

The question then becomes; why did the Roman mindset change because of Teutoburg? Where Varus' cultural misunderstanding on the tactical and operational levels led to the Roman massacre, Augustus' misunderstanding enacted policies which brought on strategic ramifications like no battle in Roman history.⁵ This misunderstanding inflated the Germanic threat to the Roman Empire as Augustus enacted unsound post-Teutoburg policies, such as conscription. Couple the Emperor's unpopular

⁵ The archeologist Peter Wells stated Rome misunderstood the Germanic societal and political environment. But Wells comes to a different conclusion than discussed in this thesis. Wells argued, "the reason for the Roman disaster in the Teutoburg forest lay not in Varus' lack of ability or his misjudgment but instead in a much more pervasive misunderstanding of the political and social situation there on the part of Augustus and his advisors." Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 86.

actions with the unique nature of the Germanic foe and this molded Roman perceptions of Germanic “barbarians” into an elevated image which affected Roman policy and society to an unparalleled level in Roman history.

Augustus and his advisors established an inaccurate image of the Germanic barbarians. The emperor made rash judgments immediately following the Teutoburg debacle, which, had he better understood his Germanic foe, he and his advisors would have recognized as unsound and the policy decisions based on them, unnecessary. Yet he created a perception that soon became a reality to the Roman world. This caused Teutoburg to produce strategic ramifications unlike any other battle in Rome’s history. Before Teutoburg, all other Roman loses proved to be merely temporary setbacks, but Teutoburg proved to be Rome’s *real* first military defeat in that it permanently halted Rome’s expansion in that area. Teutoburg established Rome’s first *permanent* defensive frontier along the Rhine.

This examination begins in chapter 2 and provides a juxtaposition of two other Roman battles, as well as their results, to demonstrate the increased significance of the Teutoburg battle. Cannae (216 B.C.) demonstrated the Roman mindset following a military loss, which united Roman will and continued their conquest of Carthage and their territories. This response established the Roman mindset which carried over to Rome’s frontier policies. One-hundred and fifty-years later, another Roman military loss against the Parthians on Rome’s eastern frontier mirrored the results in 216 B.C. After Carrhae in 53 B.C. the Romans again united and continued their expansion into Carthanian territories for centuries.

Roman and Germanic relations and events leading up to Teutoburg are also examined. Both the Roman historians and modern archeology reveal Roman settlements, construction projects and actions of the pre-Teutoburg Roman world which demonstrate that the Romans had every intention of making Germania a Roman province.⁶ Germania would be no different from Gaul or Spain and Rome planned to assimilate the Germanic lands and people into the Roman Empire. Rome flourished both along the Rhine and east of the river until the Teutoburg massacre.

The literary record will also be examined through pre-Teutoburg writers, such as Julius Caesar, who portrayed the pre-Teutoburg Roman view of Germans as just another “barbarian.” A portrayal in striking contrast to post-Teutoburg Roman writers, such as Tacitus, who depicted German barbarians in an elevated status as the most dreaded of all Roman foes. In the post-Teutoburg Roman view, Germania took on a permanent existence in the eyes of the Romans, dividing a border which would always lie beyond the Roman Empire. The Teutoburg massacre created this mindset difference.

Chapter 3 will provide an examination of both the Roman and Germanic commanders, Publius Quinctilius Varus and Arminius. This analysis highlights Varus’ previous experience before his posting to Germania as well as Arminius’ abilities and his intricate planning of the Teutoburg ambush. Varus’ cultural misunderstanding of his Germanic foe is revealed through multiple instances from inadequate march security to over trusting his Germanic “allies.”

⁶Germania refers to lands east of the Rhine held by multiple different Germanic tribes (refer to figure 1).

The massacre itself will be examined through the account of Cassius Dio, also comparing his account with modern historic views as well as what the archeological evidence has brought to light in shaping the battlefield. This chapter reveals Germanic warriors with the advantage of familiar surroundings, enhanced by Arminius' detailed preparations of the ambush site. The massacre also shows a Roman side with soldiers whose commander sent them on a march in a relaxed state. Varus failed at multiple key decision points along his march by not modifying his formation based on the terrain features and the weather, causing Varus to lose the effectiveness of his Roman scouts and his cavalry. The Teutoburg environment continued to exacerbate Roman susceptibility by fatiguing the legionnaires, through the duties that came with these conditions, such as conducting counter-mobility operations clearing trees and keeping the road accessible.

This is followed in chapter 4 with an examination of the results of the Teutoburg massacre. Varus' failure influenced the Roman strategic theater like no other battle in Roman history. Augustus and his advisors also failed to understand their Germanic foe's culture immediately following Teutoburg and this resulted in Augustus enacting rash policy decisions. These unsound decisions negatively affected the Roman people to an extent that not only limited Augustus' ability to deal with the Germans, but affected any potential for future Roman expansion. Augustus' harsh post-Teutoburg policies included reinstituting conscription and extending veteran service. These policies alienated the Roman people. This alienation caused Rome to halt further conquest in the region which set the first real limit on the Roman Empire.

Yet Augustus could have avoided this by enacting more moderate post-Teutoburg policies. Augustus and his advisors failed to assess the Germanic situation following

Teutoburg and, thus, they viewed the loss out of context. Augustus failed to analyze the Germanic tribes carefully (including their inability to engage the Romans in open battle, conduct sieges, or supply themselves logistically on an extended campaign against Rome). He also failed to examine other international players and viewed only one Germanic course of action of these barbarians attacking Rome (when in fact Arminius led his Germanic tribes against another barbarian leader in the East following Teutoburg).

The Roman reaction to the 9 A.D. defeat is examined in the context of both Roman military changes and governmental policies (especially assimilation). The image of the Germanic “barbarian” will also be placed in the framework of Teutoburg to show how Rome’s elevation of Germania stems from the contrasts of the Germanic barbarian with Roman society. This ties into Augustan policies that began and cemented this shift of the Roman mindset, a result of Teutoburg, which ultimately broke Rome’s perception of success. Augustus’ conscription actions suggest he attempted to continue Roman conquest of Germania, but recognizing the lack of Roman will and anti-conscription actions, Augustus needed to shift his strategic aim to internal control (against possible Roman Senate opposition). Rome halted conquest of Germania and shifted to a permanent defensive mindset for the first time in history, constructing a permanent border on the Rhine, when before Teutoburg there stood none

This study provides a clearer understanding of Teutoburg and the effects of this massacre. It addresses the military, political, social, and cultural issues that created great policy and mindset changes which ultimately shaped Rome greater than any battle in its history. This work also demonstrates historical lessons from both military

(commander's) and political (Emperor's) viewpoints as well as the immense ramifications that result in the cultural misunderstanding of an enemy.

Sources

The sources for this research rely heavily on the Roman writers. Cassius Dio's (150-235 A.D.) , *Roman History*, provides the only Roman surviving account of the Teutoburg battle. Julius Caesar provided an important account of the pre-Teutoburg Roman world and the Germanic barbarian in his account, *The Conquest of Gaul* (58 to 51 B.C.). While Cornelius Tacitus' accounts, particularly, *The Germania* (98 A.D.) are instrumental as well for providing a post-Teutoburg Roman mindset of the Germanic barbarians. Yet multiple other ancient writers from Velleius Paterculus(30 B.C. to 37 A.D.), who provides information on Teutoburg's participants, to Polybius(203 to 120 B.C.) and Psuedo-Hyginus (3rd century A.D.), who both give valuable descriptions of Roman camps all contribute to this research. Josephus', *The Jewish War* (67 A.D.), Flavius Arrianus', *The Expedition Against the Alans* (134 A.D.), and Vegetius, *The Military Institutions of the Romans* (379 A.D.), also help examine multiple Roman military issues, such as the details of the Roman march.

The Battle of Teutoburg has been addressed in two contemporary books. The first by the archeologist and professor of Anthropology Peter S. Wells in his book, *The Battle That Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest*. The second by historian Adrian Murdoch, *Rome's Greatest Defeat: Massacre in the Teutoburg Forest* and both these modern accounts proved

invaluable to this research.⁷ For a better understanding of the Roman army, from strategy and tactics to its connections with Roman society, multiple sources were used. Several books by Adrian Goldsworthy including, *The Complete Roman Army* and *The Roman Army at War 100BC-AD200* to Edward N. Luttwak's, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire From the First Century A.D. to the Third* proved insightful.

While for comparing previous battles, books such as *The Defeat of Rome in the East: Crassus, the Parthians, and the Disastrous Battle of Carrhae, 53 B.C.* by Gareth C. Sampson proved highly useful. Additional details of Germanic society and its interactions with the Roman Empire are accomplished through a final cornerstone to this research; and historian Kenneth W. Harl, Tulane University, with his lecture series in thirty-six parts entitled, *Rome and the Barbarians*, proved invaluable.

⁷A third contemporary book entitled *The Quest for the Lost Roman legions: Discovering the Varus Battlefield* was written by Tony Clunn and published in 2005 by Savas Beatie Publishing (New York, NY). Clunn, an ex-British Army Officer discovered the Teutoburg battlefield while on assignment in Germany in 1987. This book provides an account of his day to day discoveries metal detecting and his processes working with German archeologists. His book, though an interesting account of this discovery, is not utilized in this thesis. Clunn places his depiction of the Teutoburg Battle in a parallel and fictionalized story line.

CHAPTER 2

PRE-TEUTOBURG ROME

Historical Roman Reaction to a Battlefield Loss

To understand the unparalleled Roman response to Teutoburg and the Roman mindset shift, it is necessary to first examine pre-Teutoburg Roman defeats. Roman losses before 9 A.D. amounted to mere military setbacks, whereas Teutoburg marked Rome's first military defeat. The examination of two battles will demonstrate this.

The Romans lost three legions in the Teutoburg forest. The Germans annihilated eighteen thousand legionnaires. Yet, historically, the Romans suffered much greater losses. They lost over three times this amount at Cannae (216 B.C.) and twice as many Romans at Carrhae (53 B.C.). Over forty-eight thousand Romans were killed by Hannibal's Carthaginian Army (with over eighteen thousand captured) at the battlefield of Cannae alone (as just a part of the Second Punic War) and thirty-thousand Romans were killed or captured by the Parthians at Carrhae.⁸ Yet the marked difference lay in that the numbers of men lost were the most significant result of both the battles at Cannae and Carrhae. Though the Romans lost a much greater amount in lives than at Teutoburg; neither Carrhae nor Cannae changed the direction of Roman policy or mindset.

The Roman loss at Cannae in 216 B.C. goes back to an earlier period in Rome's history- two hundred years before Teutoburg. Rome was locked in a war of dominance and survival in the Mediterranean world with Carthage. From this conflict the Roman reaction to a battlefield loss appeared. Rome re-grouped and united in will following this

⁸Sampson, 170 and Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 40.

loss to continue to victory, conquering and assimilating its Carthaginian foe. This same Roman mindset then carried on, as Roman expanded. This same mentality of regroup, conquest and assimilation followed Rome along every frontier and appeared again in Rome's reaction to their battlefield loss in the east at Carrhae in 53 B.C. This mindset carried on for over two-hundred years, until Teutoburg marked a Roman response unlike any in Roman history.

The Battle of Cannae (216 B.C.): Rome Against the Carthaginians

The Romans outnumbered their Carthaginian adversary two-to-one.⁹ However, Hannibal used his superior cavalry to break through the Roman cavalry and surround and attack the rear of the Roman infantry, leading to a virtual annihilation of the Roman army.¹⁰ This created casualties over three times greater than those at Teutoburg.¹¹ Yet this loss did not change Roman policy or Roman mindset.

The battle at Cannae stood as just a piece of the Second Punic War, which during the first three years of this conflict, Rome lost over one-hundred thousand men.¹² Carthage killed one-third of Rome's senators in battles and Hannibal's army remained in

⁹Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 40.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Goldsworthy listed the Roman casualties at Cannae: 45,000 infantry, 2,700 cavalry, and 18,700 captured. Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 40.

¹²Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 69. It should be briefly noted that Cannae was not the only Roman battle lost to Hannibal and the Carthaginians during this conflict. Hannibal achieved multiple victories against the Romans. Both the battles at Trebia (218 B.C.) and Lake Trasimene saw large Roman loses (of 26,000 and 25,000 Romans killed or captured respectively). Adrian Goldsworthy, *Cannae* (London, England: Cassell, 2001), 33-37. Cannae was highlighted for this study because it held the greatest number of Roman casualties. Cannae also was the third of these Roman battlefield losses and all three combined failed to change Roman will or direction.

Italy for over decade.¹³ Yet, never did Rome negotiate or give in to Hannibal. Never did Rome elevate their Carthaginian enemy to an undefeatable status and never did Rome draw permanent lines that marked the limit of their Empire. Rome responded by solidifying its will. Here the Romans united under the voice of Cato the Elder, who proclaimed, “*Carthago delenda est!*”(“Carthage must be destroyed!”)¹⁴ Rome destroyed Carthage and Rome expanded, first taking Carthaginian territory, then continuing Roman expansion beyond Carthage, through North Africa for another three-hundred years.¹⁵

The Battle of Carrhae (53 B.C.): Rome Against the Parthians

This reaction to a Roman military loss carried over to Rome’s borders and its policies with frontier expansion. The battle of Carrhae, 53 B.C. displayed the same results as Cannae. One hundred and fifty years later, but the results against the Parthians mirror the results against Hannibal and the Carthaginians. This battle only cemented Roman will against the Parthians and resulted in Rome defeating and continuing conquest and Romanization deeper and deeper into Parthian territories.

Carrhae saw the loss of seven Roman legions along with their commander, Crassus, to the Parthians.¹⁶ The Parthians accomplished this with a much smaller force, approximately outnumbered by the Roman’s three-to-one. Plutarch lists the Parthian army at Carrhae with ten thousand horse archers and one thousand cataphracts (heavy

¹³Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 69 and Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 41.

¹⁴Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 49.

¹⁵Rome 1st conquered the Carthago Nova territory in Spain in 201 B.C. from Carthage. Then the Romans conquered through Carthage, and later into Numidia (Africa Proconsularis) in 44 B.C. Rome also conquered Mauretania Caesariensis in 96 A.D. Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 14.

¹⁶Sampson, 169.

cavalry).¹⁷ The Parthians achieved victory under their General (Serena) who exploited his mobility, secured the water supplies, and provided his army an immense quantity of arrows.¹⁸ This day-long shower of arrows exhausted the Romans, whom the Parthians kept pinned from advancing by the combination and cooperation of their heavy cavalry and horse archers.¹⁹ Rome lacked sufficient horsemen and armed missile soldiers to counter the Parthians properly, and with hour upon hour of arrows falling upon them, the legions finally broke and scattered, leading to the Parthian victory.²⁰

Yet while the number of lives lost at Carrhae remains tragic, it did not alter Roman mindset against the Parthians or change Roman policy. The Romans responded to Carrhae, as they had always historically responded to a Roman military loss. The Roman spirit solidified against the enemy threat and the Romans united together even stronger to confront, conquer, and eventually expand and assimilate these people and lands under Roman provinces.

After Carrhae, the Roman senate vowed, “These Eastern Barbarians must be humbled.”²¹ Rome then set out to do just that. The Parthian advance after Carrhae stopped at Antioch.²² Marc Anthony returned twice in 39 and 37 B.C, as did Nero in 58

¹⁷Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 63.

¹⁸Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 79.

¹⁹Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc, 1996), 63-64.

²⁰Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 77 and Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 56.

²¹Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 89.

²²Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 65.

A.D.²³ Trajan followed with successes of annexing Armenia and parts of Mesopotamia from the Parthians, and gave Rome its first access to the Persian Gulf.²⁴ Throughout this long history, the Roman mindset never elevated the Parthian barbarian or set a permanent limit to the Roman Empire as a result of Rome's loss.

Rome continued even further into Parthian territory, as Marcus Aurelius annexed lands along the Euphrates in 161 A.D. and Septimus Severus in 197 A.D. conquered further into Mesopotamia, including the lands surrounding Carrhae.²⁵ This finally marked the battle site Roman territory, two-hundred and fifty years after the loss of Crassus and his seven legions. Yet Rome never provincialized any land east of the Rhine after Teutoburg in 9 A.D.

The Roman Military Setback

These two examples of Cannae and Carrhae demonstrate Rome's conquests often met with setbacks. But that is all they were, temporary setbacks. The Romans faced other military losses, such as two consular armies in 105 B.C. at the hands of Cisalpine Gaul.²⁶ Rome also saw large numbers of casualties over the length of their conquests, such as forty-six thousand Romans killed during the conquest of Spain (over a fifteen year period, 180-165 B.C.).²⁷ Yet these were only setbacks. Rome's response never departed from solidifying Roman will and continuing ahead.

²³Kenneth W. Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 89-92.

²⁴Sampson, 179.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Kenneth W. Harl, *Rome and the Barbarians, Book 2 of 3*, 11.

²⁷Ibid.

The Roman losses at Carrhae and Cannae also differed significantly from Teutoburg in that both Roman losses occurred in open battle. The Romans considered an ambush (what occurred at Teutoburg), a devious and underhanded form of attack. The Parthians and Carthaginians both defeated Roman soldiers ready for battle. Therefore, the Romans had even greater reason to fear the Parthian and Carthaginian foes more than the Germans. The Roman legion had not been tested and failed in the Teutoburg; this loss resulted from multiple poor command decisions on the march (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the Teutoburg loss demonstrates even stronger reason to expect that Rome would continue forward to conquer and turn Germania into a Roman province.

Yet the difference between Teutoburg and all previous losses the Romans experienced, such as at Carrhae or Cannae, marked the difference between a Roman setback vis-a-vis a Roman defeat. Rome experienced its first military *defeat* at the Battle of Teutoburg; all other losses marked mere *setbacks* to Rome, as they did not change the course of Roman policies or mindset. These losses only instilled a greater will and dedication to victory and conquest of their enemies' lands. Teutoburg stands as the most significant battle in Roman history because of the resulting effect on Roman policy and Roman attitude. Teutoburg's change in Roman mindset shaped Roman policy and events in Germania for hundreds of years, through the rest of the Roman Empire.

Rome and Germania in the Pre-Teutoburg World

The Impact of Roman Military Reforms on Teutoburg

The Marian Reforms took place in the Roman Army beginning in 107 B.C. under Cassius Marius who accepted poor Roman citizens into service for the first time in

Roman history.²⁸ The Marian reforms abolished the requirement for a Roman soldier to own land.²⁹ Therefore many poor Roman citizens joined the military to reap the monetary and land benefits that came from this opportunity of military service. Conservative Roman society probably questioned if they had made a mistake in these changes when a century later three of these legions met destruction at the hands of Germanic barbarians, questioning if the reforms had been too drastic and sacrificed the quality of Roman soldiers and Rome herself.

Another significant aspect to Marius' reforms included shifting to an all heavy infantry army, as both the Roman cavalry and light infantry virtually disappeared and with their elimination fell the various Roman social classes in the Roman military system.³⁰ This reform also proved drastic to traditional Roman culture. But this significant decrease in cavalry and light infantry created another direct effect on the Roman army; an increased reliance on allied auxiliaries.³¹ Rome's military for the first time in her history now stood dependent on her allies (to provide light infantry and cavalry support to ensure Roman battlefield success). Therefore, by the time of Teutoburg, Rome spent almost a century first introducing these reforms and then setting them into practice. But these radical reforms now produced questionable results in the wake of the Teutoburg massacre and Rome both re-analyzed her own abilities while they

²⁸Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 46.

²⁹Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 197.

³⁰Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 47.

³¹Ibid., 48.

elevated the status of the Germanic barbarians that brought this loss upon Rome's shoulders.

Roman Assimilation

This increased reliance on Roman allied auxiliary units lead directly into the importance of Roman assimilation in the Empire. Historian Kenneth Harl argued one of Rome's principle reasons for success lay in the Roman ability to "conquer, rule, and assimilate their barbarian foes."³² Yet, Teutoburg destroyed these Roman notions of conquest and assimilation, and, in doing so, destroyed Rome's concept of success. Rome shifted to a defensive mindset and permanent border for the first time in her history upon the collapse of this success. This collapse resulted from the Teutoburg loss.

To understand the importance of assimilation in Rome better, it is important to examine the nature of the word "barbarian" itself. Webster's definitions of barbarian include, "A fierce, brutal, or cruel person" and "An insensitive, uncultured person."³³ The modern terminology carries multiple negative connotations. However, Roman society viewed barbarians from a much different perspective.

To the pre-Teutoburg Romans, the word barbarian simply came from the Latin *barba* meaning beard.³⁴ This can be traced further through Rome's Greek influence with the Hellenistic world. The Greeks utilized the term "bar bar" which meant babble and

³²Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 4.

³³*Webster's II New College Dictionary*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 91.

³⁴Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 18.

became associated with all people who did not speak the Greek language.³⁵ But the Greeks also often held “barbarians” in high regard. The Greek world displayed a high respect for Egypt as the oldest civilization in the world and both Persian and Phoenician nobles often served as teachers and mentors to the Greeks.³⁶

These positive Greek views of “barbarians” carried over into Roman society. For in the pre-Teutoburg Roman world the current barbarians across the border would be the next set of Romans, through Rome’s system of conquest and assimilation. Painting the barbarian in a purely negative light served no purpose in this context. Rome at one time saw the Gauls and Spaniards as barbarians before Roman conquests and assimilations brought them into the empire. Rome no doubt viewed the Germanic barbarians the same way, until Teutoburg set the first permanent defensive boundary in the Roman Empire and changed the notion of the word barbarian itself. This word changed and became associated with the more modern, negative images of the barbarian as the permanent defensive line at the Rhine became established as a result of Teutoburg.

Barbarians never stood as equals in this pre-Teutoburg Romanic environment, because Roman conquest and assimilation would arrive in due time. Rome also never cast these barbarians into a purely negative light because they would serve as Rome’s future auxiliaries and eventually citizens. Yet these mindsets changed as a result of Teutoburg.

³⁵Ibid., 14. The Greek term *bar bar* continued to appear throughout history. The Barbary states of the North African corsairs whose Barbary pirates in the 19th century sailed the Mediterranean received their name from the Greek *bar bar* origin as well as the current day North African nomadic peoples, the Berbers. Gregory Freemont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates* (New York, NY: Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2006), 7 and 16.

³⁶Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 16.

The 107 B.C. Marian Reforms touched on the increased importance of the auxiliaries to the Roman army. The *auxilia* included all non-Roman citizens that served as allies to the Roman army. The word itself is simply Latin for help.³⁷ The Roman auxiliary forces proved essential to Roman power, particularly after the Marius reforms when Rome needed the additional support of specialized cavalry and light missile foot troops. Therefore another reason the Teutoburg massacre affected Rome to an unprecedented level in their history rests in the heightened level of importance to auxiliaries, assimilation and ultimately the success of the Roman Empire. By the time of Augustus, assimilation lay embedded in the Roman military. In the Augustan period, half the Roman army strength (three-hundred thousand total soldiers) consisted of auxiliary troops.³⁸

Yet the sheer number of soldiers alone does not truly express Roman levels of assimilation. While Latin served as the primary language for the Roman army, the literary evidence reveals multiple languages being spoken inside the Roman camp.³⁹ The Roman army truly served as a varied and assimilated multi-cultural force by the time of Augustus.

³⁷Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 121.

³⁸Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 129.

³⁹“Whenever we distribute the allies and remaining tribes along the lanes, they must not be divided into more than three (parts) nor (should they be) far from each other so that they may hear orders (given) out loud in their own language.” Pseudo-Hyginus (translated by Miller, M.C.J. and DeVoto, J.G.), *De Munitionibus Castrorum (The Fortifications of the Camp)* (Chicago, Illinois: Ares Publishers, Inc., 1993), 87.

The Germanic Barbarian in the Roman Mindset

The Roman Empire faced an enormous variety of formidable enemies, devastating in both their skills and their images as warriors. The Scythians scalped their opponents, sewed their adversaries' skins together to serve as cloaks, and used their enemies' skulls as drinking vessels.⁴⁰ The Romans viewed the Thracians as drunken red haired giants wielding two swords.⁴¹ A large percentage of barbarian foes stood much larger to the Romans physically. Caesar himself made the comment that the Gauls refer to them as "pygmy Romans".⁴² For the Germanic barbarian to have risen above all these enemies and be listed as Rome's number one menace truly stands as a testament to the fear invoked by the Germanic barbarian in the Post-Teutoburg Roman mindset. Rome drafted a new and elevated image of the Germanic barbarian as a result of the Teutoburg massacre. For the Pre-Teutoburg Roman image gave the Germanic barbarian no special status among its enemies.

The Portrayal of Pre-Teutoburg Germania by Roman Authors

Augustus' stepson Drusus, who received accolades from the Emperor in 11 B.C. for his accomplishments in Germania, later fell from his horse during a follow-on campaign. This fall broke his leg, which led to internal injuries and gangrene that became fatal.⁴³ However, upon Drusus' death the Roman reaction did not reflect fear of the Germans. To the contrary, the poet Ovid expressed Rome's grief through a poem of

⁴⁰Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 59 and 66.

⁴¹Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 16.

⁴²Caesar, 71.

⁴³Murdoch, 37.

consolation, “There is no pardon for you Germany, but only death, the supreme penalty.”⁴⁴

This statement demonstrates the Roman mentality of the Germanic barbarians before Teutoburg, one of a clearly superior status. The Germans could easily be killed by the Roman legions and they would be conquered at the mighty hand of Rome. The barbarians could not compare to the Romans, and the Germanic barbarians in particular held no status higher than any other foe, be they from Gaul, Spain, North Africa or to the East.

This becomes evident by examining the first Roman to write of the Germanic barbarians. Julius Caesar first encountered “15,000 uncivilized German barbarian mercenaries” during his conquests in Gaul, and he even crossed the Rhine twice to confront and defeat some of these Germanic barbarian tribes.⁴⁵ Although Caesar obviously wrote with a political agenda and his truths, specifically with details such as the numbers of barbarians confronted and killed appear inflated, this does not take away from the importance of his work. Caesar’s, *Conquest of Gaul*, remains a prime source of information for establishing the Roman mindset on the Germanic barbarians, both in relation to other foes, such as the Gauls or Parthians, and also compared to the Romans themselves. Through Caesar, Rome’s perceptions of its military strength over the Germanic barbarians constantly repeated themselves.

Caesar, a pragmatic man and a sound general, recognized the Germanic barbarians as no match for his legions. He stated, “from childhood they [the Germans]

⁴⁴Ibid., 39.

⁴⁵Caesar, 43.

do not know what discipline is.”⁴⁶ In Caesar’s mind an enemy that lacked discipline possessed no threat to the Roman army. Caesar held no fear of the Germans. He embedded this mentality into his legions and Rome itself. Germanic size stood no match for Roman discipline, with the Germanic barbarians no better or more dangerous than any other foe of the Roman Empire.⁴⁷

Caesar continued, “The Romans returned to camp without a single fatal casualty, against an enemy [of Germans] four hundred and thirty thousand strong.”⁴⁸ Again the accuracy of the numbers which Caesar inflated remain secondary to the importance of the Roman mindset which he conveyed; no matter the size, Germanic barbarians stood no chance against the Romans and held no ability to impact the future expansion of the Roman Empire.

Roman strength lay again in Caesar’s words on coming to the aid of a recently conquered Gaulic tribe along the Rhine (the Ubii), in their confrontation against another Germanic tribe (the Suebi), when Caesar stated, “mere knowledge of their alliance with Rome would be enough to give them protection.”⁴⁹

Indeed when Caesar crossed the Rhine twice into Germania in 55 and 53 B.C. in order to stop German advances into Gaul and to demonstrate Rome could and would

⁴⁶Ibid., 88.

⁴⁷Caesar’s words consistently reflected his reasoning and the Roman view of the Germanic barbarians being no match to Rome and its legions. “These Germans are the same men the Helvetii (Gaulic tribe) have often met in battle and have generally defeated; yet the Helvetii were no match for our army.” Caesar, 49.

⁴⁸Caesar, 94.

⁴⁹Caesar, 95.

advance across the Rhine; he considered himself highly successful.⁵⁰ In fact the German barbarians of the Sugambri tribe stood so inferior to the Roman legions that they hid themselves in the forest for weeks, avoiding confrontation with the Romans until Caesar returned west of the Rhine, after having done “all that honor and interest require.”⁵¹ Here it is of interest to note Caesar could and did cross the Rhine to defeat enemies, the same as Rome crossing any natural barrier to defeat new foes on its frontier. The Rhine and the German barbarians who stood across it held no special status which could impede Roman conquest, progress, and desire.

Caesar also described in detail the many “tricks” that the Germanic barbarians attempted in order to defeat the Romans. Yet none of these “tricks” were successful against a Roman commander who prepared himself for them. For example, Caesar said of the German methods:

If anyone is alarmed at the fact that the Germans have defeated the Gauls . . . he should inquire into the circumstances of that defeat. He will find that it happened at a time when the Gauls were exhausted by a long war. Ariovistus [a German chieftain] had remained for many months under cover of his camp and the surrounding marshes so that they had no chance of fighting him, and then he attacked suddenly. The employment of such a strategy was possible against inexperienced natives, but even Ariovistus can have no hope of being able to trick an army by such means.”⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., 94.

⁵¹Ibid., 96. While Caesar considered these crossings successful, his assessment is only partially accurate. On the tactical level, these crossings did project a display of Roman power and persuaded German tribes not to cross the Rhine while Caesar’s legions campaigned there. However, strategically, Caesar’s crossings did not shape Germania to facilitate Roman future expansion there. To the contrary, his crossings probably united German tribal opposition to a greater level, similar to additional Roman campaigns examined in chapters 3 and 4.

⁵²Caesar, 49.

This statement in particular contained advice the Roman commander Varus would have been wise to heed more closely before advancing into Teutoburg and shall be examined in more detail shortly; but the resounding message of Caesar repeated continuously that Germanic barbarians have no chance of success against Rome.

Caesar depicted the Germans using these devious methods to gain the upper hand against the Gaulic tribes.⁵³ This implied that the German barbarian tribes could not even defeat Gaulic barbarians on an open battlefield. Therefore, in Caesar's eyes, the Gaulic barbarians proved more capable warriors and more difficult adversaries than the German barbarians. This leads to the final parallel that if the Romans conquered the Gauls, no question remained that the Romans could do the same against the tribes in Germania.

Other pre-Teutoburg writers besides Caesar expressed the same sentiments. Following Caesar's influence, the poet Horace addresses Rome and the barbarians in an ode, "While Caesar lives unharmed, who would fear the Parthian, who the icy Scythian, who the hoards that rough Germany breed?"⁵⁴ Here in particular, note that Horace categorized the Germanic barbarian on the same level as two other barbarian foes (with no special status); and none of whom compared to the greatness of Rome. The writers of the Augustan era, such as Virgil and Livy, also promoted the idea that Rome's destiny lay in world conquest and instilled this into the Roman public's mindset.⁵⁵ Virgil and Livy promoted this destiny because these poets knew no other Rome. They lived in the Pre-

⁵³Ibid., 93.

⁵⁴Murdoch, 25.

⁵⁵Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 215.

Teutoburg Rome where no barbarian foe could stand up against the might of the Roman Empire.

A final example rests in the Roman historian, Cassius Dio. Even though a post Teutoburg writer, his description of pre-Teutoburg Germania appeared as follows, “Cities were being founded The [German] barbarians were adapting themselves to Roman ways, were becoming accustomed to hold markets, and were meeting in peaceful assemblages.”⁵⁶ This complements the archeological evidence with the mindset that Rome’s direction in Germania progressed no differently than it had in Gaul or Spain. The Germanic barbarians followed along a road of assimilation and conquest. Dio’s statement displayed Romanization with trade and economic advantages (by holding markets) as well as Romanization on a provincial/ governmental level (through peaceful assemblages). A Romanization no different than all other barbarians Rome contacted throughout the course of its history.

Caesar’s message, that the Romans can easily defeat these Germanic barbarians anytime the Romans will it; stood as the Pre-Teutoburg Roman mindset. The Romans viewed the conquest of Germania east of the Rhine as inevitable. They conducted increased mobilizations along the frontier as their military and civilian footprints along and east of the Rhine continued to expand. Yet all this changed in 9 A.D. when the Teutoburg massacre completely altered this Roman direction and mindset.

⁵⁶Dio, 39.

The Pre-Teutoburg Germanic Frontier

In 9 A.D. the frontiers along the Rhine River, which divided Roman provinces with Germania, showed the bustling expansion of Roman settlements. Roman culture, commerce and the military brought Roman influence to the cities and settlements west of the Rhine since the arrival of Julius Caesar. With his conquest of Gaul by 44 B.C., Caesar brought the Gaulic provinces of Aquitania, Lugdunensus, and Belgica (just west of the Rhine) into the Roman Empire.⁵⁷

From the Roman perspective, the natural progression of Roman expansion rested on their continued expansion into Germania. Rome's intention to add these Germanic peoples and territory to the Roman Empire appears both in the historical and archeological evidence. This examination also shows how the Teutoburg massacre dramatically impacted Roman history and policy by putting an abrupt halt to the Roman idea of expansion.

After Caesar's successful conquest of Gaul, the Roman Emperor Augustus successfully conquered Spain by 19 A.D. which allowed Rome to increase its attention toward Germania.⁵⁸ With the additional legions free from commitment in Spain, Augustus redefined the empire's focus. Augustus deliberately stopped his expansion against the Parthians in the East in order to shift this focus to Northern Europe, which he saw as more inviting.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 14.

⁵⁸Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 128.

⁵⁹Ibid., 133.

The question which immediately arises; why Augustus held this view?⁶⁰ Historian Kenneth Harl argued Augustus' ties to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, shaped his ideas to place himself in the continued role of conquering Northern barbarians (after his father's image in Gaul).⁶¹ However, another potential reason that Augustus chose Germania over the East rested in Rome's perception of the Parthians. On a first examination, the lush trade routes and commercial cities of Mesopotamia and the Middle East greatly outweighed any economic profit gained from the forests of Germania. Yet, the Romans recognized the Parthians and their army as the most significant threat to the Roman world. Parthia stood as the premier Roman rival, a status which remained until the Germans replaced them as the most feared enemy in the Roman world as a result of the Teutoburg massacre in 9 A.D.

As Rome began preparations to mobilize along the Rhine, Augustus turned over the invasion to his twenty-five year-old stepson Drusus in 13 B.C.⁶² The following year (12 B.C.) began a Roman campaign focused on further extension into Germania.⁶³

⁶⁰This decision in itself seems puzzling at first when the richness of Parthia's middle east trade routes appears to dwarf economic gains the Romans could make in the rugged forests of Germania. However, Germania contained multiple raw materials the Romans sought, including iron ore, basalt, limestone, and fine potting clay. Peter S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 9. Augustus probably also examined multiple other factors, such as logistics in his decisions to focus on Northern Europe. Germania could be reached more easily and quickly than Parthia. However, Augustus' decision to shift his focus to Northern Europe probably reflected a much more underlying Roman mindset. Before Teutoburg, Rome felt they could much more easily conquest and assimilate the Germanic barbarian versus a Parthian foe (who was militarily superior to the Germans) and would prove a much more challenging adversary. This Roman mindset will be drastically altered by the Teutoburg massacre and Augustus' policy decisions following this massacre (chapter 4).

⁶¹Harl, Book 2 of 3, 133.

⁶²Murdoch, 30.

⁶³This campaign focused on exploration with the Roman fleet sailing and mapping the Jutland peninsula. The legionaries also constructed a 24km canal (named the "Drusus Ditch") which linked the Rhine with the North Sea, an accomplishment which facilitated logistical movement (allowing water

Augustus announced the campaign a great success and awarded Drusus a triumph, with Drusus celebrating his victories by riding through the city on horseback in 11 B.C.⁶⁴ Augustus captured the Roman mindset of conquest and success when he praised Drusus' campaign and Rome, proudly exclaiming, "where no Roman had gone by land or sea."⁶⁵ His mindset demonstrates the Romans viewed their destiny in continued expansion of its empire into Germania and that Rome held no permanent borders at this time.

The Archeological Record

The archeological evidence supports Rome's continued ideal to expand into Germania until Rome abandoned this mindset in 9 A.D., as a result of Teutoburg. This archeological evidence falls into two categories. The first, settlements along the Rhine, mark the Roman buildup toward mobilization and invasion into Germania. The second category of settlements actually lay east of the Rhine, displaying Rome's attempt to establish themselves and conquer Germania until Rome abandoned this idea in 9 A.D.(see figure 2)

movement versus the legionnaire physically carrying or carting in supplies across the lands of Germania. Rome viewed this canal as a stepping stone to success, necessary for continued expansion and conquest into Germania. All 12 B.C. Drusus campaign information received from: Murdoch, 32-33.

⁶⁴Murdoch, 35.

⁶⁵Ibid.



Figure 2. Roman Germania

Source: Adrian Murdoch's, *Rome's Greatest Defeat* (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing, 2006), xi.

Settlements Along the Rhine

Rome's expansionist actions into Germania appear in the archeological record. Three Roman settlements at Xanten, Cologne and Mainz (figure 2) along the Rhine show the efforts Rome engaged in to expand the Empire into Germania. These settlements display urbanization and Rome's attempt at permanence east of the Rhine.

All these settlements, west of the river and along the Rhine, provided the Romans good defensive positions against the tribes of Germania. Rome built Xanten strategically located, as the Northernmost of these cities, where the Rhine connects with the River Lippe. Xanten and the river Lippe served the Romans well, as a slow flowing river with no rapids, it proved ideal for the Romans to transport men and supplies from the Rhine into the heart of Germania.⁶⁶ Drusus used this river for this purpose (as well as Varus, the Roman Governor of Germania later in 9 A.D., when he set off with three legions into the Teutoburg forest.)⁶⁷

The archeological evidence demonstrates that the Romans founded Xanten between 13-12 B.C.⁶⁸ This state of the art city construction coincides with Rome's first campaigns into Germania (under Drusus as mentioned above). The Romans built Xanten for the purpose of expanding Rome's presence east of the Rhine and making Germania its next conquest.

The second site at Cologne holds even more interest. Cologne marked the beginning of urbanization in the area and historian Adrian Murdoch argued Rome molded Cologne into the civilian capital and a future model for all of Germany.⁶⁹ This site also marks a shrine, called the Ara Ubiorum, which served as an altar for the Ubii tribe (a Gaulic tribe along the western side of the Rhine).⁷⁰ The Romans constructed another

⁶⁶Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 91.

⁶⁷Ibid., 90.

⁶⁸Ibid. Xanten also held the only gravestone marking a soldier's death at Teutoburg (a member of the XVIII Legion, Marcus Caelius). Wells, 90.

⁶⁹Murdoch, 71.

⁷⁰Ibid.

similar altar, eleven years earlier in Lyons.⁷¹ This drew a direct comparison to the Gauls in Lyons and the Ubii tribe along the Rhine. It also supported the Roman vision of conquest east of the Rhine into Germania and that the Romans planned to assimilate the Germans into the Empire, the same as the Gauls. The Germans stood on the next step of a Roman expansionist road whose length had never previously been set in the Roman world.

The pure size and amount of stone used at Cologne adds to its notion of permanence and to Rome's intension to expand east of the Rhine.⁷² Another stone structure in Cologne, still seen today along the banks of the Rhine, the Ubiermonument, archeologists believe to be an uncompleted mausoleum.⁷³ Through the study of tree ring growth in its oak pile foundations, the Ubiermonument dates between 4 and 5 A.D.⁷⁴ This date, only five years before the Teutoburg massacre, coupled with its unfinished state, stands as an important testament to Roman direction and Teutoburg's impact.

Since the Romans never finished this project, the Teutoburg massacre changed Roman notions of the need and purpose of this structure and in the bigger picture, the city of Cologne itself. A mausoleum in a thriving future Roman capital stood as necessary to support the expanding infrastructure, but after Teutoburg drastically altered the Roman mindset, the city's function itself changed. The Romans shifted to a defensive mentality, focused on protection from Germanic barbarian attacks. The importance shifted to the

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

defensive, as Cologne and all settlements along the Rhine River came to serve as the *first* permanent border in the Roman Empire.

This new mentality held no room or need for a mausoleum. Indeed as the function of the city of Cologne changed as a result of 9 A.D., Roman city planners, engineers and architects shifted their focus. That the Romans never re-started construction efforts on the mausoleum anytime after 9 A.D. stands as testament to the permanence of the Roman mindset shift with their Germanic foe and to the new principle defensive role of Cologne for centuries to come.

The archeological evidence also shows a third Roman settlement along the Rhine, Mainz, south of Cologne intersecting with the River Lahn. This site, also established in 13 B.C., sat 100 feet above the Rhine and could support two Roman Legions.⁷⁵ Again this city, along with the first Roman settlement examined at Xanten, highlights Roman expansion. All settlements along the Rhine served as legionary and logistical hubs, all established in order to support Rome's conquest of Germania.

Yet after 9 A.D. these three sites continued to serve Rome, but in a drastically different capacity than the Roman's who built them envisioned. They became a part of a permanent defensive line, for the first time in history, marking the limits of the Roman Empire.

Settlements East of the Rhine

While the sites just examined along the Rhine experienced great transition as a cause of 9 A.D., the sites east of the Rhine underwent greater change, by abandonment,

⁷⁵Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 89.

as a result of Teutoburg. That the Romans never re-established these sites suggests the permanence of the change following Teutoburg and their halt of conquest and assimilation east of the Rhine. If these goals remained, Romans would have reclaimed and re-inhabited these settlements after the conflict.

While the Romans established multiple temporary camps east of the Rhine as the army conducted its campaigns, they also established outposts along the Rivers Lippe and Lahn. Archeologist Peter Wells noted multiple outposts along and east of the Rhine.⁷⁶ Two sites east of the river Rhine, Haltern and Waldgirmes, contain the most archeological evidence to date and thus provide the best keys to understanding Roman actions and intentions in Germania.

The first of these sites at Haltern is reached by departing from Xanten and following along the River Lippe (figure 2). Haltern dates to 5 B.C.⁷⁷ Wells also argued that the size of the site, which is larger than that of a typical legionary base, coupled with the unusually large amount of officer housing at this site, led him to believe that Haltern served as an administrative base for establishing the future Roman province in Germania.⁷⁸ The Haltern site also contained lead piping, when most military camps were constructed with wood.⁷⁹ This lead piping emphasizes Rome's commitment to the area along the same patterns of Haltern's increased size. But how Haltern met its demise is also important.

⁷⁶Ibid., 91.

⁷⁷Ibid., 96.

⁷⁸Ibid., 91-92.

⁷⁹Murdoch, 73.

The Germans assaulted and burnt Haltern to the ground in the autumn 9 A.D. shortly after Teutoburg.⁸⁰ The archeological evidence provided multiple caches of buried materials (from hoards of coins whose dates run up to and stop at 9 A.D., to intricate terra sigillata pottery; which the Roman upper class would pack up and take with them under normal circumstances.)⁸¹ Based on these findings Wells attributed the condition of this site to a hasty abandonment.⁸² The significance lies in these items, hidden and buried, remaining at Haltern. The Romans did not come back and claim them. They could not. For while these Roman settlers may have expected to return to their items after this temporary problem with tribes along the frontier resolved, as these temporary problems always did in the past; Haltern proved the exception. These Roman items remained in the ground for two-thousand years, because the Romans never again crossed the Rhine with visions of a new province in Germania after 9 A.D. They never deemed the area of Haltern safe enough for civilians to return and reclaim their property. Once again this attests to the idea that Teutoburg shifted a Roman mindset permanently and abandoned Roman ideas of a future province in Germania.

The second site east of the Rhine at Waldgirmes lies further south. From Mainz, travel North-East along the River Lahn to reach Waldgirmes (reference 2). Here archeologists found a Roman Forum, the symbolic heart of Roman administration.⁸³ When examining a site for Roman intentions, historically a forum speaks clearly of

⁸⁰Ibid., 121.

⁸¹Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 103.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Murdoch, 72.

Roman aims in the forms of conquest and assimilation of Germania into a province. It stood for government, the Roman way.

The site, still being excavated, unveiled an elaborate lead pipe water system and urban architecture, which help clearly define this as a civilian settlement.⁸⁴ Waldgirmes also compares in size to Roman settlements in Astorga and Les-Fins-d'Annecy, two of the most recent Roman conquests and new provinces of the Roman Empire, in Spain and in France (Gaul) that clearly detailed Rome's intentions to make Germania the next Roman province.⁸⁵ Yet Roman never fulfilled these intentions as a result of Teutoburg. The Romans abandoned Waldgrimes as well, in such haste that Roman builders working on homes left their projects uncompleted in their quick departure of 9 A.D.⁸⁶

Significance

Of greater significance than these 9 A.D. abandonments; Romans never again returned to continue this building expansion east of the Rhine after Teutoburg. A halt to construction could have been a delay, just a minor setback. Romans often confronted rebellions and setbacks in their provinces; but these were temporary in nature. However, Teutoburg instilled in the Romans a change in mindset. The Romans never returned to these settlements, meant to serve as the administrative hubs for the Roman Empire's expansion into Germania. They never returned because Roman plans for Germania drastically changed after 9 A.D. Rome no longer saw lands east of the Rhine as a future Roman province. This change occurred because of the Massacre at Teutoburg.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 121.

CHAPTER 3

THE MASSACRE OF TEUTOBURG

Varus and Arminius: The Commanders

Publis Quinctilius Varus

The Roman historians particularly did not write kindly of Publis Quinctilius Varus, as they looked in hindsight at the catastrophe of Teutoburg. The Roman historian Velleius Paterculus described Varus as, “slow in mind as he was in body and more accustomed to the leisure of the camp than to actual service in war.”⁸⁷ Yet Velleius Paterculus, writing his account after Varus’ failure, takes away from Varus’ previous accomplishments.⁸⁸

Historian Adrian Murdoch established a strong record of Varus’ previous posts that showed Varus’ capability both administratively and militarily when governing Rome’s farthest frontiers. Varus held connections both through family and marriage; he was the brother-in-law of the future Emperor, Claudius Nero Caesar Tiberius.⁸⁹ He accepted his first of three foreign posts in his early forties as the Governor of Africa in 8 B.C, where he excelled managing against a constant Berber threat.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Paterculus, 297.

⁸⁸That no post-Teutoburg Roman writer ever spoke well of Varus only contributes to the image this battle set in the Roman mind. This loss would forever cover any previous accomplishments Varus accomplished in the pre-Teutoburg Roman world.

⁸⁹Murdoch, 54.

⁹⁰Ibid., 56.

Varus also handled command of the Roman army very well. This becomes clear during his next assignment as the Governor of Syria (beginning in 6 B.C.)⁹¹ When a large scale revolt erupted in Jerusalem, Varus performed exceptionally in this campaign.⁹² He led the Roman legions to secure Galilee which protected his rear and he burned Emmaus to secure his flank (and punish those who had ambushed Romans earlier), before he successfully captured the city and quelled the revolt.⁹³ This is important because it showed that Varus commanded in regions which had faced ambushes previous to Teutoburg.

To accomplish this, Varus took two legions, and four cavalry squadrons.⁹⁴ Taking the additional cavalry squadrons demonstrated that he learned his lessons from Roman history and Crassus' defeat fifty years earlier at Carrhae (Chapter 2), a Roman loss which occurred in large part due to their lack of cavalry. Varus' actions suggest he understood Rome's previous mistake and would not repeat it. Varus displayed both willingness and capability in the use of Rome's military as an instrument to govern the frontier.

Two of Varus' actions in particular attested to his skills and sound judgment as governor during this revolt. He gauged the amount of force necessary to succeed while not overreacting. This greatly assisted his transition and return to normalcy for governing the region. In quelling the Jerusalem revolt, he both left towns at peace that did not

⁹¹Murdoch, 57

⁹²Murdoch, 65.

⁹³Ibid., 64.

⁹⁴Ibid., 63.

revolt against Rome and he sent away his Arab allies, known for pillaging a great deal.⁹⁵

These actions show culturally astute decisions which address the bigger picture of regional stability and facilitation of continued governance after the revolt.

In Syria, Varus demonstrated a superior ability to weigh situations and then accurately gauge the level of force necessary to quell the situation. He understood second and third order effects with civilian populations and met to perfection Rome's long-term strategic plan for success in the region. As commander, he possessed an understanding of the region, demonstrated when he bypassed the other cities that did not revolt. He did not burn or garrison these cities, out of fear of them joining the revolt or out of a means of punishment to the region as a whole. Varus understood these actions would negatively impact the campaign, by creating unnecessary animosity and likely providing additional supporters to the revolt while simultaneously draining Roman manpower. Varus' actions suggest a strong sense of cultural awareness in the East.

His widespread experience and Syrian successes, coupled with his family ties, made Varus a natural selection to his next position in Germania. Varus became Governor of Germany in 6 A.D. with the missions of securing the province militarily while introducing the *Lex Provinciae* (Roman code of law).⁹⁶ Here in Germany, Varus' failed in his awareness of his foe and his actions fell shorter than he displayed in Syria and North Africa.⁹⁷ With the *Lex Provinciae* and its Roman code of law came taxation and

⁹⁵Ibid., 64.

⁹⁶Murdoch, 65 and 70.

⁹⁷This leads to the question of why Varus proved so effective in Syria yet failed in Germania? Historian Derek Williams provides an interesting possible explanation, stating Varus' previous governances were over provinces with a history of servitude to rulers. Derek Williams, *Romans and Barbarians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 94. This servile attitude highly contrasts the historical

urbanization.⁹⁸ Varus might have averted the Teutoburg disaster through better understanding his Germanic foe. Had he better understood Germanic culture and recognized the great disparities with the Roman way of life, he may have introduced these reforms into German society at a slower pace. Had Varus better studied the reluctance of the Gauls and Spaniards (who as with most new provinces under Roman rule, the concept of taxation always created unease and lead to revolt) he may have selected his decisions differently in Rome's interactions with the Germanic peoples.

It becomes apparent that Varus did not understand the Germanic environment by his increased attempts to Romanize the Germans, while at the same time not measuring his own force protection and security measures necessary in his environment. Cassius Dio criticized Varus along these lines, "he strove to change them more rapidly. Besides issuing orders to them as if they were actually slaves of the Romans, he exacted money as he would from the subject nations."⁹⁹ Dio questioned both Varus' treatment of the Germans as a people (in terms of being slaves) and his utilization of a higher taxation (as if the Germans were already a province) and thus too quickly attempted to Romanize this new batch of barbarians. Varus' treatment angered the Germans.¹⁰⁰ Both of these examples point to his poor cultural understanding of the Germanic peoples and region.

freedom of the peoples in Germania and had Varus only known one way of interacting with cultures, this may mark his ineffectiveness in Germania.

⁹⁸Murdoch, 64.

⁹⁹Dio, 41.

¹⁰⁰Velleius Paterculus also wrote, "he[Varus] entertained the notion that the Germans were a people who were men only in limbs and voice." Paterculus, 299. These portrayals are suggestive of Varus conducting his Germania governorship in an arrogant manner.

Germany, more than any other enemy in the Roman world, lived in a culture that did not revolve around cities and urbanization. Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus summarized the German view of cities as, “Tombs surrounded by nets.”¹⁰¹ A purely negative image, this German mindset combined the essences of death (in the form of tombs) and traps (in the forms of nets) to the concept of the city. The Romans attempted to put drastic changes into a culture which had clearly contrasting viewpoints to the Roman way of life. Varus would have been wiser to recognize these differences and their significance and go about instituting Roman changes in Germania in a slower, more discerning manner.¹⁰²

Yet even commanders with strong previous experience can fall victim to disasters, particularly through lack of cultural and situational awareness in new and different regions, if they do not keep themselves aware of their environment. Varus ultimately failed at Teutoburg. However, Varus failed at the hands of an exceptional adversary.

Arminius

Arminius, the Cherusci chieftain who led the surprise attack at Teutoburg, possessed a rare skill set. He utilized his ties to Rome and his knowledge of the Roman army (based on his service to Rome as an auxiliary officer) with his Germanic tribal position. This gave him the opportunity to accomplish a near impossible task of defeating the Roman army

¹⁰¹Murdoch, 121.

¹⁰²Or if Varus wished to continue this fast paced change he needed to recognize his cultural environment and enact more Roman security measures.

Velleius Paterculus' description of Arminius stands in grand contrast to his depiction of Varus. "Thereupon appeared a young man of noble birth, brave in action and alert in mind, possessing an intelligence quiet beyond the ordinary barbarian, Arminius, the son of Sigimer, a prince of that nation, and he showed in his countenance and in his eyes the fire of the mind within."¹⁰³ Velleius Paterculus continued to describe Arminius, "associated with us [the Romans] constantly on previous campaigns, had been granted the right of Roman citizenship, and had even attained the dignity of equestrian [officer] rank."¹⁰⁴

His position as an auxiliary officer meant that Arminius spoke Latin and he even may have served with Velleius Paterculus (who before he became a Roman historian served as a Roman cavalry officer), together against the Pannonian uprisings.¹⁰⁵ Arminius' noble birth also increased his abilities to influence his own and surrounding German tribes while his experience as an auxiliary officer provided a practical understanding of Roman tactics which he manipulated with disastrous results as he conducted his Teutoburg ambush.

Arminius aligned three additional tribes who participated in the ambush in 9 A.D.: the Chatti, Bructeri and Angrivarii.¹⁰⁶ One of the impressive feats Arminius accomplished included holding these Germanic tribes together, through their common interests against Rome, long enough to succeed in the ambush. He prepared and executed

¹⁰³Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome*, 299.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵Murdoch, 85.

¹⁰⁶Murdoch, 102.

this under constant division of pro-Roman Germanic barbarians, including his own brother and other Cherusci tribal leaders such as Segestes, who recognized the gains to be made in Romanization.¹⁰⁷ Arminius led a group of Germanic barbarians, inferior in discipline, weapons, and armor against the strongest military force in the 1st century A.D. ancient world.

The Massacre Unfolds

While Velleius Paterculus was harsh in his description of Varus; he was also perceptive. He described the Germania situation, “he [Varus] came to look upon himself as a city praetor administering justice in the forum, and not a general in command of an army in the heart of Germany.”¹⁰⁸ Varus assumed this relaxed attitude of governance because he misunderstood his enemy and his environment. He therefore conducted Roman affairs, including the Teutoburg march using an improper level of force protection and security. This ultimately allowed the ambush to be effective and enabled Germans success.

Varus misunderstood the cultural atmosphere in which he served and as a result lost his situational awareness in Germania. Archeologist Peter Wells correctly identified that Rome, from Augustus and his advisors to Varus lacked an understanding of the

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 92. Tacitus recounts an argument between Arminius and his brother, Flavus, in which Flavus speaks of Rome’s greatness while Arminius counters by categorizing his brother as a slave and stressing the importance of his tribe’s freedom and the German gods to establish his position. Cornelius Tacitus (translated by Michael Grant), *The Annals of Imperial Rome* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1956), 81. This suggests Arminius’ motivation behind leading the Teutoburg ambush to be that he viewed himself as liberating his people and wished to repel Rome from his tribal lands.

¹⁰⁸Paterculus, 299.

northern European societies and this led to Rome's defeat at Teutoburg.¹⁰⁹ Yet Varus committed multiple errors in judgment along the march that resulted from his lack of situational awareness as well. He not only conducted an improper march through what he thought to be friendly territory, but also failed to recognize terrain and weather restrictions. These errors prevented proper use of his cavalry and scouts. All these negative factors combined with Arminius expert preparations of the ambush led to the Roman massacre in Teutoburg.

Varus' March

Varus conducted this march to end what he believed to be a rebellion in Germania. In fact, Arminius and his conspirators staged a ruse. They enacted an imaginary uprising for Varus to subdue in order to lure Rome away from their defensive fortifications.¹¹⁰ This made the Romans susceptible to an ambush as they marched to quell this rebellion. Luring the Romans away from their fortifications and into the forest proved instrumental to German success because they did not possess the ability to besiege fortifications or to defeat legions in open battle (both of these themes reoccur in the next chapter).

Velleius Paterculus commented that Segestes (a pro-Roman German) informed Varus of Arminius' treachery and Varus chose to disregard this information.¹¹¹ Varus

¹⁰⁹Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 214-216. Wells goes on to argue that this lack of understanding occurred because Rome emphasized historical continuity and not change, but that the Germanic barbarians and all of Northern Europe were undergoing change (in part because of Rome's actions in Gaul) and Rome did not examine these changes. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 214-216.

¹¹⁰Dio, 43.

¹¹¹Paterculus, 301.

apparently disregarded it based on his friendship with Arminius and Arminius' previous loyal service to Rome. Another factor may have swayed Varus into believing this a Germanic family quarrel (and not a sincere threat to Rome). The German who provided this information (Segestes) openly argued with Arminius at this time, because he disapproved of Arminius wish to marry his daughter, Thusnelda.¹¹²

The fact that Germans warned Varus does not seem implausible due to the Germanic tribal disharmony and the number of pro-Roman barbarians amongst the Germans. It speaks strongly of Arminius charisma to both vanquish any doubts of his friendship and sincerity in the eyes of Varus and the Romans, while Arminius simultaneously built and maintained his ambush plans. Cassius Dio noted the strong trust and friendship that Arminius held with Varus, "constant companions and often shared his [Varus'] mess."¹¹³ Dio's account indeed brings to light a personal friendship with Arminius that blinded Varus' clarity and situational awareness of the region in which he governed.

Yet how much Varus knew and to what level the Roman historians critiqued Varus in hindsight remains unknown. Regardless, no doubt exists that Varus and his advisors stood at fault for the massacre in the Teutoburg forest. Had they been more alert to the historical tendencies of Roman "provincialization", more aware of German culture, or more attentive to their surroundings and marched in a more defensively sound formation, this massacre would have been averted or at least occurred differently.

¹¹²Edward S Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, (London, England: Da Capo Press, 1851), 119.

¹¹³Dio, 41.

But Varus marched through Germania as if marching through friendly territory. Cassius Dio noted, “The Romans were holding portions of it (Germania) - not entire regions but merely such districts that happened to have been subdued.”¹¹⁴ This reality contrasted with Varus’ mindset. Arminius’ friendship helped blind Varus; but had he been more aware of the current political climate (through a knowledge of Germany and thus a sense of their hostilities), he surely would have marched in a more defensive manner.

Arminius’ Elaborate Multi-Faceted Attack

Arminius established an elaborate and well synchronized plan. Only through careful planning and his insightful leadership could the Romans be defeated, particularly amidst a group of Germanic warriors with less training, inferior weapons and little-to-no armor. Arminius overcame constant Germanic tribal rivalries coupled with the pro-Roman supporters embedded within his own tribe by temporarily allying these numerous Germanic tribes to face what they saw as an encroaching Roman threat to their way of life. This led to the ambush and massacre of three Roman legions, three divisions of cavalry, and six cohorts.¹¹⁵

However, Arminius’ preparations went far beyond the specific ambush site alone. In order to execute this massacre, he led multiple conspirators at various locations, to destroy the Romans stationed throughout the area. Cassius Dio specifically addressed this, “he [Varus] did not keep his legions together, as was proper in hostile country, but

¹¹⁴Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁵Paterculus, 297.

distributed many of the soldiers to helpless communities, which asked for them for the alleged purpose of guarding various points, arresting robbers, or escorting provision trains.”¹¹⁶ Therefore at each community and each guarded point Arminius pre-positioned a number of Germans ready to strike there. The German number needed to be sufficient to maintain German confidence enough to carry through with the attack and to successfully defeat the Romans. Arminius orchestrated these ambushes through his trusted Germanic warriors who led these attacks at each location.

Arminius maintained command, cohesion, and communication to execute these ambushes successfully. The Germans orchestrated their attacks within a tight timeframe and therefore Roman contingents proved unable to alert others to the attack. If even one Germanic group of warriors attacked too early or failed, then the ambush risked compromise and an alert to other Roman locations. However, Arminius planned and perfectly executed his attack. His success again depicted by Cassius Dio, “after the men in each community had put to death the detachments of soldiers for which they had previously asked, they came upon Varus....”¹¹⁷

Examining other Roman sources related to Roman garrison size and additional duties of Roman frontier garrisons corroborates Dio’s account. Roman officials posted many legionnaires in the nearby areas to assist with a variety of tasks that both supported the legion and accomplished additional assignments. For example, the strength report of Cohors I Hispanorum Veterana quingenaria, commanded by the prefect Arruntianus in 105 A.D., (although incomplete with numbers missing or unclear) listed multiple

¹¹⁶Dio, 41.

¹¹⁷Dio, 43.

absences, such as legionaries temporarily posted away to two nearby garrisons.¹¹⁸ Others received posts to supplement the fleet temporarily or were assigned to smaller expeditions to accomplish tasks from mining to procuring additional cavalry horses, grain, or clothing.¹¹⁹ Additional Roman manning documents confirm these temporary field assignments as well.¹²⁰

These detachments' reports suggest all legions had soldiers who were assigned in the nearby area, but temporarily away from the main legion. In Varus' case, add to this that one of his main tasks as governor of Germania was the new institution of Roman law and tax collection. This required him to send additional men to implement and oversee this process and thus Varus' main body of legionnaires were at a possibly even greater reduction of size than the average legion. When Varus assigned these additional tasks to legionnaires in different nearby communities, he effectively decreased the size of his marching force. The Germans destroyed three legions. Not all were specifically at the Teutoburg battlefield, but rather throughout the Teutoburg area. Arminius planned to strike each one in near simultaneous fashion. The Germans possessed the ability to attack smaller factions of Romans through the element of surprise coupled with the lax security environment which Varus continued to set as the example.

The fact that Arminius managed to keep the Germans as a whole quiet beforehand; also supports the complex nature of Arminius' attack, as well as marking his character as a strong leader. Any minor Germanic hostilities or uprisings would bring to

¹¹⁸Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 145.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰The report of Cohors I Tungrorum found amongst the Vindolanda tablets placed 456 soldiers absent on detached duty. Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 144.

Rome's attention a discontent among the area. This would create a risk of Rome shifting into an increased security posture. Yet this did not happen. Cassius Dio specifically commented on the German lure into Roman calm and complacency, "behaving in a most peaceful and friendly manner led him [Varus] to believe that they [the Germans] would live submissively without the presence of soldiers."¹²¹

The Teutoburg ambush did not occur from a makeshift plan upon spotting vulnerability in the Roman march, but through a well organized evolution by Arminius. The amount of time it took the Germans to gather for war also supports Arminius preparing this ambush well in advance. To assemble the German tribal army took at a minimum several days.¹²² With the four tribes involved at Teutoburg, this assembly probably took longer; but they stood assembled and ready for Arminius. The Germans stood ready because Arminius began the plan and process well in advance. No doubt pre-meditated; this extensive planning also comes across more clearly by an examination of the archeological evidence of the battlefield.

Archeology of the Battlefield: Teutoburg

The archeological evidence also revealed Arminius' detailed preparation before the Teutoburg ambush. Arminius chose this location for its tactical advantages the terrain gave the Germans and they also built upon these advantages through additional pre-battlefield preparation. The archeological evidence revealed a man-made wall at Teutoburg. The Germans constructed a wall of sod, two thousand feet in length, five feet

¹²¹Dio, 41.

¹²²Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 45.

high, with a fifteen foot base.¹²³ At some sections, wooden fencing lay at the wall's very top.¹²⁴ A portion of this wall collapsed during the battle.¹²⁵ This collapse suggests the recent and temporary nature of the wall; its hasty craftsmanship designed for the sole purpose of Teutoburg. This wall demonstrates the extensive pre-battle preparations Arminius supervised. The Germans prepared an already ideal ambush site to increase their probability of success.

Arminius utilized this wall for three reasons. It served as cover for German warriors to await the Romans silently. It was the launching point for the main ambush, where Germans mounted on it cast spears down upon the Romans from an advantageous position. Finally, the sections of fencing served as an additional last defensive should things go poorly and the Germans be forced to retreat back into the forest.

¹²³Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 50.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵The collapse of this wall covered a portion of the archeological finds at the battlefield, such as a silver face mask, pickaxe, and helmets. Items the Germans would have claimed after the battle under normal circumstances, yet remained behind because they became buried in the collapse. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 51.

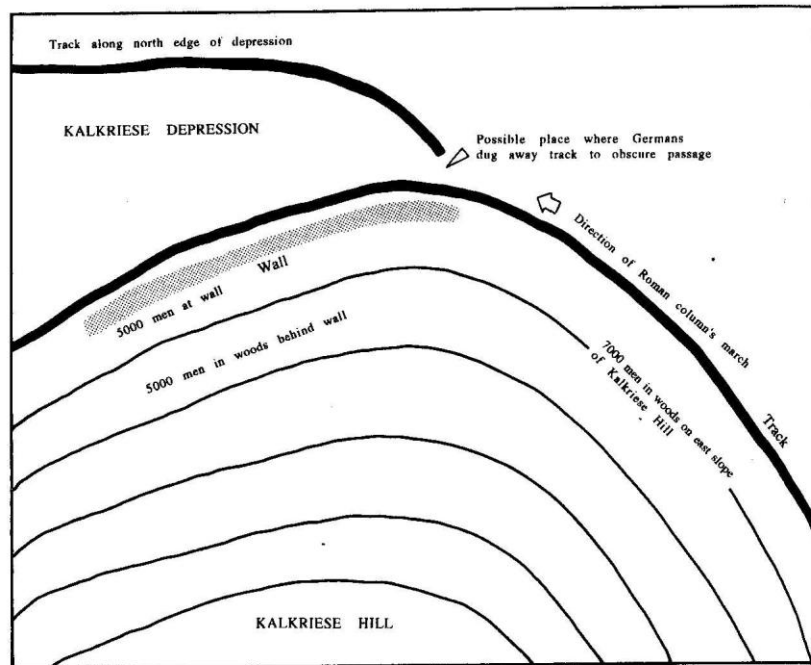


Figure 3. Possible Roman March Route /Battlefield of Teutoburg

Source: Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 162.

The Topography of Teutoburg

Arminius built this wall to enhance an ideal ambush site, specifically chosen for its geographical advantages. The Germans chose a path with a large bog to the North and the Kalkreise hill (350 feet high) that bottled Varus and his legions' line of march.¹²⁶ Its narrow length limited maneuverability and caused additional complications for the Romans. They needed to adjust their ideal marching length abreast and shrunk it accordingly to fit this situation, expanding the marching length even further. This took

¹²⁶Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 47.

the Roman soldiers one step further out of their standard practices and away from the tactical integrity of their marching formation.

Arminius chose a geographic location that impeded Roman movement through multiple obstacles. As the Romans slowly and tediously marched down this narrow path through dense forest, the trail at the Teutoburg site also revealed multiple streams which ran intersecting it and created slippery roots as well as deep areas of mud.¹²⁷ These geographical factors all came together to create a complicated environment for Rome. The environment created obstacles for the Romans from communications to legion movement of cavalry and baggage. The terrain also posed serious difficulties to establish a quick defensive. Among all these conditions, Arminius staged his ambush.

Unveiling Varus' March through Teutoburg

Arminius' success rested in large part with the Roman's poor security measures. This increased the Roman legions reaction time, and became unacceptably slow in the face of an ambush. The Romans lost because they were unable to establish the order and cohesion necessary to form a defensive formation at Teutoburg. If the Romans had established their legions in a defensive position, Roman superiority in weapons, armor, discipline, and training should have allowed the Romans to defeat this ambush.

In examining the Roman march, it is important to note that no handbook specifically addressing Roman marching details survives today.¹²⁸ If such a handbook survived, there would be clearer understanding of the Roman march. However, from the

¹²⁷Ibid., 28-29.

¹²⁸Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 131.

general Roman historical accounts that survive, Varus' march into Teutoburg can be pieced together. Marching order varied depending on multiple factors, such as terrain, whether the Romans marched through friendly or enemy territory, and the presence of a road network.¹²⁹ Caesar described creating different marching formations based off the level of threat he suspected from that particular region.¹³⁰ Also the quality of the road system and particularly if Roman roads had been established impacted the Roman march. Weather also affected the marching order as well as whether the Romans marched through friendly or hostile territory. A final factor is that the Romans modified their marching doctrine and adjusted it over time as the army expanded and transformed.

Roman marching order clearly varied and this is illustrated through Roman sources. Josephus, in his account, *The Jewish Wars*, when General (and future emperor) Flavius Vespasianus marched to Galilee in 67 A.D., listed the Roman marching column with six abreast.¹³¹ While Flavius Arrianus', *Expedition Against the Alans*, in 134 A.D listed the Roman march at only four abreast.¹³²

In an examination of both Pseudo-Hyginus, *De Munitionibus Castrorum* (The Fortifications of the Camp) and Polybius', *Excursion on the Roman Camp*, they expressed in extensive detail aspects of the Roman camp and its construction, from individual duties and watch standing procedures to camp dimensions. From these

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰"With the soldiers formed in three parallel columns, ready for wheeling into line of battle, he made a rapid march of eight miles." Caesar, 93.

¹³¹Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books III-IV* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1927), 41 and Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2006), 190.

¹³²Flavius Arrianus, *Expedition Against the Alans* (Chicago, Illinois: Ares Publishers, 1993), 116.

documents some additional procedures of the Roman march can also be deduced. In Pseudo-Hyginus account, he listed secondary areas established such as the workshop, infirmary, and animal hospitals with the number of Romans (two-hundred) assigned to each.¹³³ He even recounted exact distances which have permitted modern scholars to reconstruct the Roman camp more easily today.¹³⁴

This level of detail and exactness marked an essential characteristic of the Roman camp. It not only facilitated the efficiency in moving such a large body of soldiers but it also placed the legionary soldier and their commanders in a routine. Whether the Romans constructed this camp in the heart of Germany or the far reaches of the Eastern Empire, the Roman soldier followed his individual duties of camp construction. This routine, cemented through training, helped the legionnaire establish a sense of calm, a sense of the known amongst unfamiliar surroundings. Particularly in a combat situation, in the chaos of a battle, this calm becomes lost and thus the trained routine can be a critical factor in a soldier's performance, in this case attempting to establish a defensive. Varus' marching in a relaxed posture through confining terrain never gave his legionnaires this opportunity.

Polybius, in his description of Roman camps, also brought additional aspects of the Roman march to light. For example, Polybius explained the process of deconstructing the camp and beginning the march. This happened through a series of three signals. "When the first signal is given, the soldiers strike the tents and collect the

¹³³Pseudo-Hyginus, 83.

¹³⁴For example, Pseudo-Hyginus explained the construction of the Roman camp, with particular exactness to the dimensions, "ten feet are allowed for the tent, 15 feet for weapons, 8 feet for pack animals, hence there are 24 feet. Twice this is 48; since they camp opposite each other, a lane of 60 feet is created. 12 feet remain which will suffice as space for those passing by." Pseudo-Hyginus, 67.

baggage. When the second signal is given the baggage is loaded on the beasts of burden; and at the third, the first maniples begin the march, and the whole camp is set in motion.”¹³⁵ This defined the detail and precision of Roman movements. Again this would be expected as necessary for efficiently moving such a large number of legionnaires and mirrors the Roman military professionalism displayed in all their endeavors. Roman attention to detail, administration, and discipline in the legions all stood among the highest in the ancient world. No reason exists for the Roman military not to hold the same standard with its march.

Yet Varus failed to practice this Roman routine through the Teutoburg movement. The marching signals that kept each legionnaire in close formation and ready to react to ambushes by establishing a defensive formation did not exist on this march. Cassius Dio described the Roman march in Teutoburg, “They had with them many wagons and many beasts of burden as in time of peace; moreover not a few women and children and a large retinue of servants were following them- one more reason for them advancing in scattered groups.”¹³⁶ Dio stated that Varus marched in such a relaxed position that the Romans advanced scattered and thus created gaps that the Germans exploited. With a penetration of the Roman line, the legionnaires could not regroup after the initial shock and form a defensive formation.

Polybius specifically noted the third signal commencing the Roman march, when everyone marched in step and allowed the Romans to stay organized. This kept the

¹³⁵Polybius (translated by Miller, M.C.J. and DeVoto, J.G.), *Excursion on the Roman Camp* (Chicago, Illinois: Ares Publishers, Inc., 1993), 37.

¹³⁶Dio, 41.

formation compact and efficiently marked their distances and time along the march. The Roman historian, Flavius Vegetius Renatus, specifically noted in the training of the Roman soldier, “No part of drill is more essential in action than that soldiers keep their ranks with the greatest exactness, without opening or closing too much.”¹³⁷ Vegetius (who wrote in the hindsight of Teutoburg) provided a manual for training which reads like an after action report of Varus’ disaster. Vegetius continued to describe the hazards of marching too closely together or spread out and concludes with these improper marches; “universal disorder and confusion are inevitable.”¹³⁸

The archeological evidence also suggests Varus followed improper marching procedures with women, children, and servants amidst the Roman ranks at Teutoburg. This evidence of the battlefield found women’s items, including a ladies hairpin and two female brooches.¹³⁹ These items, not found at other battlefields or Roman camps, support Cassius Dio’s account of an improper marching order.

But the relaxed manner of the march, its increased distance between legionaries, and that women marched with the legionaries, does not conclude Varus’ faults at Teutoburg. The Romans slaughtered at Teutoburg never received proper warning of the German ambush. The Romans also did not receive cavalry protection on their flanks. Varus displayed an inability to adjust to his situation properly and misused both his advanced party scouts and cavalry at Teutoburg.

¹³⁷Flavius Vegetius Renatus (translated by Clark, John), *The Military Institutions of the Romans*, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraph Press, 1944), 30.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 53.

Roman Advanced Party Scouts at Teutoburg

In a Roman march, the first group always consisted of scouts. Although not every account lists these scouts as mounted, Arrianus specifically listed “mounted scouts”, while Josephus mentioned the scouts only generally as “light-armed auxiliary troops and archers”.¹⁴⁰ Most accounts list them as light cavalry. Cavalry would have given the scouts greater ability of movement and cavalry messengers greater ease of return to the main body to keep them abreast of any problems and updates on the terrain ahead.

Varus’ inability to see his situation clearly appeared again in the examination of his scouts. Varus ordered one of two possibilities in the Teutoburg march. He may have sent no Roman scouts and relied on auxiliaries, the “friendly” Germans, aligned to Arminius. Historian Adrian Murdoch even suggested the possibility of Arminius being part of this advanced scouting party.¹⁴¹ This scenario speaks to the charisma of Arminius in persuading Varus and the Romans throughout the march.

However, another possibility also fits the historical evidence and could account for the inability of the scouts to alert and play their role to prevent the Teutoburg disaster. Varus may have sent a group of Romans with these German guides, and the Germans in the advanced party with these Romans, slaughtered them just prior to the main ambush. This theory supports Arminius’ detailed planning. The Germans killed all the Romans in this advanced party before these scouts could return to Varus and the main body and signal the approaching ambush. In either scenario, Varus lies at fault because he sent no

¹⁴⁰Arrianus, 115 and Josephus, 39.

¹⁴¹Murdoch, 103.

Roman scouts or an insufficient number of Roman scouts and relied too heavily on his Germanic allies which placed the whole Roman army in great peril.

Sections of the Roman March

After the scouts, Josephus listed a contingent of Roman soldiers, both infantry and cavalry.¹⁴² This contingent of Roman legionnaires probably served as an advance guard, with the purpose of dealing with any immediate minor confrontations the advanced scouts came across along the march and provided security during camp establishment. Next, a detachment comprised of ten men from every century followed, with all camp marking instruments and entrenching tools.¹⁴³ The Romans placed these soldiers forward in the line of march, so that they could arrive early at the afternoon camp location and begin its layout and construction for the legions which followed. Next, the engineers marched toward the front and focused on the roads.¹⁴⁴ They worked to improve the road conditions, particularly to allow the carts and beasts of burden carrying Roman equipment, food, and baggage to continue along at the same rate of march as the Roman army. Varus and his senior commanders, with guard, traveled next, followed by the bulk of the Roman army.¹⁴⁵ Servants, baggage (equipment and food), a baggage guard and finally a rearguard comprised the end of the Roman march.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴²Josephus, 39.

¹⁴³Ibid., 41.

¹⁴⁴Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2006), 188.

¹⁴⁵Murdoch, 104. Centurions followed behind the army, and keep watch over their men. Murdoch, 104 This probably ensured against Romans falling out along the march, and helped to maintain discipline and march integrity under normal circumstances.

¹⁴⁶Southern, 189.

The Roman Cavalry at Teutoburg

Cavalry served two functions. Its primary function protected the flanks, screening it on the march as they rode along side. This protected the legionnaires from a direct ambush, which gave the legions time to form into battle order.¹⁴⁷ The secondary function gave the Romans their communication. Riding along the sides of the legions, selected cavalry messengers delivered information to Varus and the Roman leaders.¹⁴⁸ These same cavalry messengers then moved along the lines from legion to legion keeping all Roman units updated. Both the primary and secondary functions of the cavalry, protecting the flanks and communication, failed at Teutoburg.

Why did this failure occur? The cavalry could not perform at Teutoburg. The Germanic barbarians targeted them early in the ambush. Arminius knew the Roman cavalry's strengths and weaknesses and focused on the Roman cavalry in order to negate this Roman advantage. Roman cavalry would be near useless in Teutoburg's confined terrain and adverse weather. Horses slipped on exposed roots and were hampered by the mud while the surprise volleys of German spears wounded and startled the horses as they threw their riders and galloped uncontrollably, adding to the chaotic environment.¹⁴⁹

The cavalry may even have needed to dismount before the ambush, as a result of these terrain and weather constraints. The section above on the geography of Teutoburg examined the environment of forests, bogs, and lack of roads that made the Romans adjust to a shorter abreast column on their march. The Romans proved unable to extend

¹⁴⁷Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 108.

¹⁴⁸Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 174.

¹⁴⁹Murdoch, 108.

their cavalry to screen the Roman flanks because the terrain prohibited it. The forest dictated this task a physical impossibility, an obstacle the Roman cavalry could not properly march along side of to protect the flank of the legionnaires.

The trail the Germans led the Romans down also contained streams and tree roots which complicated the Roman cavalry march. Add to this a storm described by Cassius Dio; and the confusion and difficulty of the cavalry to perform their functions becomes evident. Dio noted, “Meanwhile a violent rain and wind came up that separated them still further, while the ground that had become slippery around the root and logs, made walking very treacherous for them.”¹⁵⁰ If walking was dangerous, maneuvering Roman cavalry was near impossible.

In any scenario, geography or storms, Varus displayed a lack of situational awareness. With his cavalry impaired or dismounted, he should have recognized the increased vulnerability to his flanks and adjusted accordingly. As a commander, he should have addressed the increased susceptibility and set a heightened protective posture by halting his march and tightening its formation before deciding to continue through the heavily forested and bogged area of Teutoburg. Varus’ failure to assess the situation took away all advantage the Romans normally held when deploying with cavalry forces.

Lastly, Varus also failed to recognize that time was not a critical factor to his march. A Roman contingent of legionnaires did not lay stranded at his destination that needed to be reached by nightfall for fear of being overrun. Varus marched to suppress what he believed to be a rebellion and failed to recognize the larger picture. In a worse case scenario, the rebellion may have grown a small degree in size with a delay; a

¹⁵⁰Dio, 43.

negligible result for the might of the Roman legions to overcome. In this scenario, there was no reason to sacrifice the strength of a marching column for speed. Upon entering the restrictive environment of a narrow road and increased forests and bogs or at the outbreak of adverse weather, both proved key decision points for a Roman commander to re-examine his current situation and adjust accordingly. Yet, Varus neglected to do so.

Ambush in the Teutoburg

The Roman legionnaire trained to cover a march of twenty miles in a day's routine. Vegetius listed this distance as the required length of the training march, which the Romans conducted three times a month.¹⁵¹ But this training was of little benefit in the hands of a commander who failed to maintain situational awareness and rectify potential weaknesses in his marching formation as they arose.

The relaxed formation of Varus' march coupled with the narrow path and forested environment through which the Romans marched, greatly extended the length of their lines. While it is difficult to determine how far apart sections of the Roman marching order under Varus extended, Murdoch recreated its length through Teutoburg at between eight to ten kilometers.¹⁵² A length of march with three legions would have allowed the Romans to establish a **defensive** position at multiple points if they had been marching in a state of readiness or been able to provide communication.

The Roman loss at Teutoburg resulted from their inability to establish any defensive formation of the legionnaires to hold off the Germanic barbarians. Had the

¹⁵¹Vegetius, 31.

¹⁵²Murdoch, 103.

Romans been able to establish themselves temporarily, they could have strengthened their defensive position and then, through their superior training, weapons, and equipment; repelled and routed the German ambush. Yet the relaxed formation of the march conducted by Varus and the inabilities of the scouts and Roman cavalry to accomplish their functions made the Romans vulnerable to a level they could not recover from once ambushed at Teutoburg.

The inability to establish a defensive formation during the Teutoburg ambush exacerbated itself because the Romans marched in an exhausted state even before they reached the ambush site. The storm added to Roman soldier misery on the march as they traversed unfamiliar terrain through forests, streams, unpaved terrain and mud, all pushing the Romans toward physical exhaustion. Cassius Dio addressed this issue, “and the tops of trees kept breaking off and falling down Hence the Romans even before the enemy assailed them, were having a hard time of it felling trees, building roads, and bridging places that required it.”¹⁵³ Roman legionaries grew fatigued by the heavy physical exertion of manually clearing a large quantity of trees both across their path and to widen their path in order to allow for the additional roadwork and bridgework required for carts, beasts of burden and equipment to continue.

These counter-mobility actions emphasize that Varus needed to conduct defensive acts to conduct this march and demonstrate a total lack of precaution to adjust his march security. With these counter-mobility actions, the Roman soldiers were lulled not only

¹⁵³Dio, 43-45. Arminius’ extensive preparations of the ambush site suggest he may have added to the trees that fell naturally across the pass by the storm. The Germans may also have cut trees themselves to increase Roman difficulty. Both the adverse weather (which naturally fell some of the trees) and the Roman lax marching formation add to the possibility of Rome failing to recognize this enemy action which created additional obstacles.

by the additional physical labors and the misery of the storm, but also through the laxness of their commanders' march in a relaxed state, seemingly through "friendly" territory. Then the Germans attacked.

Wells recreated the Teutoburg battlefield to show Arminius had the ability to place 5,000 warriors along the man-made wall.¹⁵⁴ He estimated 5,000 lay in the forest behind the wall and placed 7,000 in the eastern slope of the forest.¹⁵⁵ Wells estimated the German manpower totaled 17,000.¹⁵⁶ He used village settlement density in the regions coupled with the individual settlement size and the number of adult males able to bear arms against the Romans.¹⁵⁷ A smaller number of approximately 15,000- 20,000 appears accurate, specifically because all Germans did not stand behind Arminius. The pro-Roman factions of the German tribes may not have followed Arminius to the ambush site or been given all details of his planning. Arminius' extensive pre-battlefield preparation went beyond the ideal location and enhanced terrain improvements such as the man-made wall. Arminius also probably ensured every warrior carried multiple spears and placed even greater caches of spears at strategic points throughout the battlefield.

Wells recreated the battle to show the onslaught of spears that could be hurled upon the Romans in the opening moments of the ambush. He based his data on a man

¹⁵⁴Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 168.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶He reached this estimation based off his studies of the German archeological evidence of the outlining regions. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 123-124.

¹⁵⁷Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 123-124. Wells also noted that an increased settlement density could potentially have given the Germans even greater manpower at Teutoburg. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 123-124. Murdoch also used population density to estimate Arminius' forces at 15,000. Murdoch, 108.

being able to throw a spear every four seconds and argued the Germans cast 25,000 spears in the first twenty seconds of the battle.¹⁵⁸ Once again, this demonstrates a well planned and executed attack on the part of Arminius. Arminius displayed cohesiveness in timing the German attack as one consolidated effort that stands tribute to his leadership. Without Arminius' leadership, the Romans would have seen a portion of Germans hastily throwing spears and giving other Romans time to deploy into a defensive formation. But the Germans capitalized on unity in the attack and preplanned and executed their signals well to ensure all Germans attacked in near simultaneous fashion.

Cassius Dio described the opening of the ambush, "At first they [the Germans] hurled their volleys from a distance; then, as no one defended himself and many were wounded, they approached closer to them."¹⁵⁹ The importance of this initial onslaught of spears cannot be underestimated. Its success greatly boosted German morale. The German warriors saw Romans unable to establish defensive positions due to the Roman marching formation, terrain, and the weather. This instilled confidence and rallied the Germans to charge and engage the Romans openly, continuing the slaughter.

The ability to maneuver also played a role in the German success. Cassius Dio continued, "while the Romans were in such difficulties, the barbarians suddenly surrounded them on all sides at once, coming through the densest thickets as they were acquainted with the paths."¹⁶⁰ The Germans lived and hunted the Teutoburg forest all

¹⁵⁸Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 168.

¹⁵⁹Cassius Dio, 45.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

their lives, and thus were familiar with the area. This gave the Germans several advantages; initial positioning, massing attacks, and modifying and advancing forces throughout the battle. Therefore, the Germans held the ability to pinpoint all Roman weaknesses and exploit them rapidly.

The Germans also enhanced this maneuverability by their lack of armor, much less restrictive than that of the Romans. Cassius Dio again noted, “their opponents on the other hand, being for the most part lightly equipped, and able to approach and retire freely, suffered less from the storm.”¹⁶¹ The weight of the Roman equipment (particularly their armor and heavy shields) exacerbated Roman movement. The Roman legionnaire fought with seventy pounds of gear (his weapons, shield and armor) and combining this with the aggressive hand-to-hand combat style; the legionnaire exhausted himself within twenty minutes.¹⁶²

Now added to this was the long march through highly restricted terrain during a storm. Upon ambush, the Romans proved unable to unite into an immediate defense, because individually they could not even gain solid footing as the storm turned the forest roots and streams into slippery impediments. Amongst these restrictions, the legionnaires attempted to protect themselves against waves of spears and against Germanic charges into the unorganized Roman lines.

¹⁶¹Dio, 47.

¹⁶²Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 137.

Length of the Battle of Teutoburg

The ease of physical exhaustion when engaging in such a fierce style of hand-to-hand combat also helps historians better examine unanswered questions at Teutoburg. The battle's timeline remains a matter of debate. Murdoch sided with the ancients that the battle took place over several days.¹⁶³ However, Wells believed that the massacre took place within an hour.¹⁶⁴ A third possibility suggests the battle may have lasted an afternoon.¹⁶⁵

Cassius Dio's account had the Roman's lasting four days. The Romans established camps and attempted to move from these camps, ultimately to no avail as the Germans encircled them; and continued to diminish the Roman army until they could deliver the final blow.¹⁶⁶ However, Dio may have attempted to reason the defeat within the Roman mindset and thus extended the battle, being unable or unwilling to imagine the Romans slaughtered in so short a period.

To counter this aspect of Dio's account, no Roman camp near Teutoburg has been found to date.¹⁶⁷ This lack of archeological evidence supports a one-day battle. It is

¹⁶³Murdoch, *Rome's Greatest Defeat*, 1 and Dio, 45.

¹⁶⁴Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 176. Wells argument rests largely on his battle reconstruction. His examination of the high amount and effectiveness of the German initial spear attacks estimates 5,000 Romans killed, while 10,000 lay mortally wounded and dieing, with the remainder (a few thousand) captured in the a one hour timeframe. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 176.

¹⁶⁵A shortened timeline to the battle is a minority view. This paper recognizes the merits in the argument of the multiple day battle that wore down Roman forces, but presents the minority view here in order to bring to light unexamined aspects of the battle with the hopes of furthering the discussion and clarity of the battle at Teutoburg.

¹⁶⁶Dio, 47. Murdoch believed that Varus attempted to establish a defensive, encamp, and then break this encampment. He felt the Romans attempted to pass through the Germans in order to reach the river and travel back to the safety of Xanten. Murdoch, 110.

¹⁶⁷Murdoch, 109.

suggestive considering that the battlefield itself yielded such extensive evidence.

Additional support of a one-day battle appears in the design of the Roman camp. After the twenty mile march that concluded each day, the Romans constructed their camp in the afternoon, in order to ensure its construction before nightfall. Murdoch estimated the process of building the ditch for the Roman camp to take between three to five hours under normal circumstances.¹⁶⁸ If the Roman legionnaires took this amount of time for the ditch of their camp under routine conditions, imagine attempting this in a storm and under attack. In combat conditions, a great portion of Roman forces needed to defend as the remaining men constructed under the peril of hurled spears and charged attacks. This combat scenario would greatly expand the timeline necessary for the Romans to establish a camp and made it less possible that they could do so amidst the conditions of the Teutoburg ambush.

A battle lasting longer than one day also requires the assumption that the Romans established a **defensive** position from their improper state of march. The Romans would have needed not only to form into defensive positions, but also maneuver themselves to terrain suitable to establish a camp. Within Teutoburg's thick forest and bogs, this would have proven an immensely difficult task and required the surviving Romans to maneuver in a defense formation. They also needed to search an area they were unfamiliar with for a suitable campsite; all while under attack and through this highly restrictive terrain. Only then could the Romans have encamped and survived more than one day at Teutoburg.

¹⁶⁸Murdoch, 110.

Additional factors that lead to a one-day battle include the Germanic tendency to loot a battlefield as opposed to follow the Roman army. If this had been the case at Teutoburg, the Romans could have established a defensive position and escaped from the area while the Germans remained preoccupied plundering the Roman wagon trains, equipment and supplies. However, because the Romans never established their defense, it is likely that the Germans completed their massacre in one day and looted following their victory.

Historical examples illustrate the German tendency to choose plundering the wagon trains versus continuing an attack. This is shown through another ambush, under Arminius himself, which allowed the narrow escape of a different Roman commander, Caecina, and his four legions.¹⁶⁹ The German focus on the wagon trains gave Caecina time to establish a defensive and successfully defeat the German follow on charges, where from the defensive position, the Romans routed the attack and slaughtered many of the Germans.¹⁷⁰ All these instances combine to lead to a one-day battle.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹Murdoch, 141.

¹⁷⁰Ibid. This example of Arminius' failed ambush occurred in 15 A.D. Murdoch, 137. This failed ambush addresses the fact that Rome did cross the Rhine after 9 A.D., except for limited purposes, such as the recovery of legionary eagles and showing a presence of force to keep the Germans on their side of the Rhine. Murdoch, 139. These limited post-9 A.D. Roman campaigns will be covered in more detail in the next chapter, as well as the fact that Rome never conquered lands, established Germania east of the Rhine as a province, or re-established their settlements east of the Rhine. A final important note in this 15 A.D. failed ambush rests in the fact that Arminius did not want to conduct a direct German attack into the Roman camp, but Arminius' uncle, Inguiomerus, did and the Germans chose to follow Inguiomerus. Murdoch, 142. Therefore even after his victory at Teutoburg, Arminius had not entirely consolidated his tribe (and the surrounding Germanic areas).

¹⁷¹ The length of the battle of Teutoburg remains a particularly interesting debate. For more detailed accounts of the battle itself see Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003) and Adrian Murdoch, *Rome's Greatest Defeat*, (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing, 2006).

A one-day German victory at Teutoburg also fits into Arminius' well planned synchronization of the attack. He gave orders to the Germans in the advance party of guides to reach the ambush area at a certain time, probably the early afternoon. Arminius controlled the battlefield and the movement of the Roman army through the German contingent in the advanced party scouts. As a former Roman auxiliary officer, he recognized when the ideal time for setting an ambush occurred (after a day of marching through the forests and storm worn down the Roman soldiers). An ideal scenario would include, just an hour or two before the Romans would have prepared for camp, the Germans guides in the advanced party reporting to Varus that a suitable encampment area lay just a short distance ahead. Arminius utilized the fatigue of the Romans, even more pronounced with his good fortune of having adverse weather, the same as Arminius utilized the terrain and Varus' lax marching formation against the Romans.

Concluding the Battle

This chapter examined the Roman and Germanic commanders at Teutoburg, their previous experiences, and the historical context of the march leading into the Teutoburg. This chapter stressed Varus' failure to understand his enemy's culture which resulted in errors at both the operational and tactical levels. This chapter also reviewed the details of the battle and elaborated on new facets of the Teutoburg massacre. The level of Arminius' planning and executing multiple smaller ambushes in connection with the main ambush as well as the exhaustion of the Roman troops on arrival at Teutoburg and the length of the Teutoburg battle itself were all examined.

The Roman military placed daunting precision into their training, planning, and preparation, such as the establishment of the Roman camp. Little doubt remains that

Rome put any less care into its marching formation. However, Varus failed to gain situational awareness and adjust his army's formation accordingly (throughout multiple milestones of his march through Teutoburg.) His defeat rested not only in his lack of cultural awareness that created this relaxed formation, but also in his failure to utilize his cavalry and advance party scouts based off his environment and the situation.

Varus committed suicide, falling upon his own sword at Teutoburg rather than let the Germans take him captive.¹⁷² However, the loss of his life and the eighteen-thousand Roman soldiers at Teutoburg marked only the beginning. This battle's significance carried well beyond Teutoburg, affecting the Roman mindset, policy and ultimately the Roman world like no other battle in Roman history.

¹⁷²Dio, 47.

CHAPTER 4

CONSEQUENCES OF THE TEUTOBURG MASSACRE

This section highlights the results of the massacre including increased defensive fortifications along the Rhine, Roman troop increase along the Rhine, and Rome never conquered territory east of the Rhine. For the first time in Roman history a limit of the Roman Empire was drawn because of the cultural misunderstanding of Rome's Emperor Augustus and his advisors, whose poor policy decisions following the Teutoburg massacre made this Rome's first military defeat. Other battle losses examined showed only temporary setbacks whereas Teutoburg brought on ramifications like no other battle in Rome's history.

Neither Carrhae nor Cannae (Roman battles examined in Chapter 2) shifted the Roman's mindset to the defensive. Neither loss established permanent bases and forts to protect a marked frontier. Neither set a permanent boundary for the Romans. However, after Teutoburg, the Romans elevated the status of the Germanic barbarian. The Romans increased the size of the legions along the Rhine to eight, double any other frontier on the Empire, and established increased defensive outposts along the Rhine.¹⁷³ Teutoburg set the first limits of the Empire in Rome's history.

Results of the Teutoburg Massacre

Europe still shows signs of the results from the Teutoburg massacre today. The battle set the permanent dividing line which separated the Romance languages derived

¹⁷³ Cornelius Tacitus (translated by Michael Grant), *The Annals of Imperial Rome* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1956), 33.

from Latin with the Germanic languages still used today.¹⁷⁴ But in 9 A.D., the results of this massacre affected Rome like no other loss in its history. It altered the Roman mindset of the Germanic barbarian and that led to Rome establishing a permanent defensive position, which gave the Roman Empire its first permanent borders in the history of Rome.¹⁷⁵

The results of this battle went well beyond loss of the three legions. After Teutoburg, Roman legionary bases more than doubled along the Rhine. The pre-Teutoburg Roman archeological settlements along the Rhine (referenced in chapter 2) shifted to the defensive with a new primary purpose of supporting the defensive line of Rome along the Rhine at Xanten, Cologne, and Mainz. The Romans established four additional legionary bases along the Rhine after Teutoburg as well, at Nijmegen (Noviomagus), Neuss (Novaesium), Strasbourg (Argentoratum), and Vindonissa (Venta Belgerum).¹⁷⁶ The fact that the Romans focused on increasing defenses along the Rhine and not continuing east of the Rhine to re-establish their previous settlements,

¹⁷⁴Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 214. The historians J. F.C. Fuller in *The Decisive Battles of the Western World* and Edward S. Creasy in *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* both include Teutoburg in their selections. However, they both looked at the impact of the battle from a macro-level. They concluded Teutoburg's significance by arguing the course of European history would have changed drastically. Fuller argues that "this great English nation would have been utterly cut off from existence." J.F.C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the Western World Vol 1*, (London, England: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1954), 253. While Creasy argues a Roman victory at Teutoburg along the same lines, stating the historical Franco-German problem would have been entirely different and therefore history would not have seen the emergence of Charlemagne, Napoleon, or Hitler. Edward S Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, (London, England: Da Capo Press, 1851), 115. This chapter takes a different approach and examines the policies of Augustus and the effects of Teutoburg in comparison with previous historical Roman loses to prove these other loses were mere setbacks and that the repercussions of Teutoburg far outweighed any other battle in Rome's history.

¹⁷⁵Williams notes that Teutoburg would give birth to the later Roman idea of formal frontiers. Williams, 91.

¹⁷⁶Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*. (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 34.

demonstrates a Roman mindset shift. With the increase in defensive posts, Rome also increased its legions along the Rhine, almost doubling in number from five (in 6 A.D.) to eight legions after Teutoburg.¹⁷⁷ The idea of turning Germania into a Roman province was an idea of the past.

Following Teutoburg, the Romans never conquered beyond the Rhine River throughout the rest of its Empire.¹⁷⁸ This period (9 A.D.) set the first permanent defensive line and marked the limits of the Roman Empire. Teutoburg came at a time when Rome, the most powerful empire in the world, had not yet reached its full height. Rome would continue to expand, increase its territory, wealth, and power for centuries to come. The Romans completed their conquest of Britain by 96 A.D. and continued their push east conquering Mesopotamia (which holds the city of Carrhae; from the defeated Roman battle in Chapter 2) by 200 A.D.¹⁷⁹ Rome continued expansion south into North Africa and North into Dacia; yet never into Germania.¹⁸⁰ Rome never conquered territory east of the Rhine, as Teutoburg caused the first permanent expansionist halt in Rome's history.

¹⁷⁷Luttwak, 47 and Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 204. To put this increase into perspective Tacitus provided figures on the locations of the Roman legions in 23 A.D. At that time the following locations held two legions: Egypt, Africa, Dalmatia, Moesia, and Pannonia; with three legions in Spain and four in Syria. Luttwak, 17 The number of Rhine legions doubled Rome's next greatest perceived threat (of four legions against the Parthians in Syria). Clearly, the Germanic barbarian received an elevated status as a result of Teutoburg and became the most feared and dangerous foe of the Roman Empire.

¹⁷⁸Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 14.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁸⁰Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 14-15.

The Post-Teutoburg Roman World

Tacitus' Portrayal of the Germanic Barbarian

With the pre-Teutoburg Roman authors, Caesar led the sentiments that the German barbarians stood as no match to Roman might, and that Germania possessed no ability to halt a Roman conquest. The effects of Teutoburg completely altered this mindset as a new Germania unfolded, one out of Roman reach because of its occupation by the most dreaded of foes, the Germans.

As a post-Teutoburg Roman historian and the only Roman author to write a work specifically focused on Germania and its people, Cornelius Tacitus, in his book, *The Germania*, provided an essential key to discovering the post-Teutoburg Roman mindset.¹⁸¹ Born forty-seven years after the Teutoburg massacre, his work made constant reference to the strength of the Germans, “From the alarm of the Cimbrian arms to Trajan In this period much punishment has been given and taken. Neither by the Samnites, nor by the Carthaginians, nor by Spain or Gaul, or even the Parthians, have we had more lessons taught to us.”¹⁸² By specifically contrasting the Germans with foes who Rome had previously suffered losses against (such as the Carthaginians and Parthians), Tacitus helps confirm the line between a Roman setback and a Roman loss. The Germanic foe stood on another level and Germania would remain permanently divided from the Roman Empire.

¹⁸¹Thomas S. Burns, *Rome and the Barbarians 100 B.C. – A.D. 400*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 4.

¹⁸²Cornelius Tacitus (translated by H. Mattingly and S.A. Handford), *The Germania*. (London, England: Penguin Books, 1948), 132.

Tacitus read and drew from Caesar's works, even copying him in instances, such as a description of a German battle technique that showed Germans choosing the fastest warriors to serve and run along a cavalry horseman into battle.¹⁸³ Although Tacitus copied sections of Caesar, their conclusion and opinions dramatically differ. This difference results from the Roman mindset having changed as a result of Teutoburg.

The German people and the land Germania itself took on mythic descriptions. Tacitus related, "what comes after them is the stuff of fables . . . Hellusii, Oxianes . . . faces and features of men and bodies of animals." A completely fanciful description, yet its effect should not be dismissed. Rome itself began though a legend, from Romulus and Remus suckling from a wolf.

Tacitus' portrayal of German warriors reveals the fear and status Romans placed in their German adversary. He described a group of German barbarians, the Harii, as they dyed their bodies and blackened their shields, waiting to do battle on moonless nights.¹⁸⁴ Specifically powerful in Tacitus' account rests the awe and fear he instilled, when he continued, "Shadowy awe inspiring appearance of such a ghoulis army inspires mortal panic for no enemy can endure a sight so strange and hellish. Defeat in battle always starts with the eyes."¹⁸⁵

Through Tacitus' description, the Germans have already defeated the Romans; before any battle, defeated them by their own perception. No enemy (to include the Romans) can defeat such a menacing warrior. Tacitus clearly established the viewpoint

¹⁸³Caesar, 54 and Tacitus, *The Germania*, 106.

¹⁸⁴Tacitus, *The Germania*, 137.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

that Rome should never again attempt to expand east of the Rhine in a conquest of Germania. Caesar would never have uttered such words. In the post-Teutoburg Roman mentality, Germania cannot be conquered. East of the Rhine stood a permanent defensive border against the most dreaded of Roman foes.

The Germanic Warrior's Contrast to the Roman Solider

An elevated status of the Germanic barbarian resulted from the Teutoburg massacre. This elevated status occurred in the Roman mindset both because of the contrasts of Roman and Germanic societies and as a result of Roman policies following Teutoburg. The unique nature of the Germanic barbarian foe with direct opposite differences to the Roman soldier helped paint a picture of the Germanic barbarian which became undefeatable in the Roman mindset.

Chapter 2's examination of the word barbarian showed its roots with Latin and the significance of the beard to the barbarian. The German barbarian epitomized this description. As Tacitus noted, "As soon as they [the Germans] reach manhood they let their hair and beard grow as they will."¹⁸⁶ Compare this to the Roman solider, a direct opposite. Roman soldiers always remained clean shaven, pragmatic soldiers who never grew beards as they could be pulled in battle by the enemy and used against them.¹⁸⁷

Other linguistic examinations present themselves in comparing the Roman solider to the Germanic barbarian, including *nudus*; in Latin meaning both unarmored and

¹⁸⁶Tacitus, *The Germania*, 127.

¹⁸⁷Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 18.

naked.¹⁸⁸ Imagine the effects on the Romans when defeated by an enemy who stood unarmored, in their language, nude. That the word meant both unarmored and naked expresses the deep connection of the Roman soldier to his defensive strength in his armor, his feelings of security and protection greatly diminished without it. Without his armor the Roman stood bare, inferior; literally naked. To be defeated by a foe *nudus*, truly projected the Germanic barbarians in a feared image and as a devastating warrior foe.

Roman and Germanic Motivation

The Roman soldier and Germanic warrior differed in their very core. The career Roman soldier who served with the hopes of his retirement bonus highly contrasted the Germanic barbarian. The Roman professional served an extended contract, (which after 6 B.C.) concluded with the Roman soldier being granted a cash or land retirement sum.¹⁸⁹ Where on the other hand, the Germanic warriors of the Chatti tribe wandered the lands and fought for any noble willing to feed them.¹⁹⁰ The Germanic warrior sought fame, prestige, and an increase in tribal status.¹⁹¹ Markedly different from a Roman soldier, who displayed no reckless behavior or attempts to prove his manhood, but served Rome in a career oriented capacity with the goal of retirement on a parcel of land or with a retirement sum to establish himself back in Rome.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸Murdoch, 91.

¹⁸⁹Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 117.

¹⁹⁰Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 70.

¹⁹¹Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 44.

¹⁹²Luttwak, 2.

Still other accounts of the Germanic barbarians included noble German youths fighting for other tribes when their tribes remained at peace.¹⁹³ To the Roman citizen, these cultural differences displayed by the Germanic warriors shocked them. The careful Roman professional and the Roman citizen could not understand the Germanic warrior. To him, the German warrior appeared brazen and uncontrollable and therefore ruthless and dangerous. Because the Romans did not understand the Germanic warrior, they feared him; and though this fear was unsound, it elevated the Germanic foe in the Roman mindset.

Tacitus described the Germanic warrior, “none of them has a home, land, or any occupation.”¹⁹⁴ The Germanic barbarian projected a fierce image of a full time warrior with nothing to lose. Yet the Roman citizen had everything to lose; lands, a home, possessions, monetary wealth, years away in service if conscripted, and ultimately his life now that these Germanic barbarians “threatened” Rome. This Roman could not contemplate the mentality of the German barbarian and not understanding him or Germanic strengths and weaknesses elevated their view of the Germans to an unsound level.

Arminius and the Germans could not have threatened the Roman Empire in 9 A.D with an offensive campaign against Rome. But from the perspective of the Roman populace, they knew the Germans slaughtered *three* Roman legions in the Teutoburg forest. Combine this with the victorious German warrior who fell into none of the

¹⁹³Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 70.

¹⁹⁴Tacitus, *The Germania*, 128.

sensibilities the Roman citizen envisioned. Rome viewed a truly warlike class of people who petrified them.

Rome had seen great change in their political environment with an Empire established, changes in wealth from the additional conquests, and social and military change with the Marian Reforms. Yet with all these changes, the Romans no longer saw an army capable of defeating the barbarian threat which had wiped out the Romans at Teutoburg. From the strength in unity of the Roman legion to the individual warrior prowess of the German, these contrasts continued to shape the Roman image of the Germanic barbarian.

How could newly conscripted Roman “soldiers” (ordinary citizens in their Roman minds) compete against this great Germanic menace who wiped out professional and well trained Roman legions? This perception based itself on multiple additional factors following the 9 A.D. defeat. The Roman professional military army of 9 A.D., though well trained, now spent greater and greater time with engineering tasks, and not true soldiering. With Rome’s recent expansion, more and more roads needed to service the empire. Roman soldiers now also serviced the Empire’s expansion in the form of canals, bridges, fortifications, camps, and construction depots.¹⁹⁵

Again, this perception of the Roman soldier contrasted with the Germanic barbarian, personally chosen from all the empire to serve as the emperor’s elite body guard because of the Germanic strength and fighting abilities.¹⁹⁶ An image of a warrior

¹⁹⁵Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 114.

¹⁹⁶The Emperor Augustus chose Germans to serve as his praetorian guard, until dismissed in 9 A.D. following the Teutoburg massacre. Dio, 51.

Rome could no longer defeat. The Roman soldier still possessed quality training and equipment which gave the legion a military status well superior to any tribes of Germania; however this did not reflect itself in the Roman mindset. This perception of strength in the Germanic warrior unjustly cancelled Roman superiorities, such as with siege warfare and sustaining large legionary armies in the field. The Romans saw a Germanic enemy with no cities to besiege and no Germanic army who would meet the Roman legions on the open battlefield. **The perceived Roman strengths stood in check by the unique culture of their foe and thus elevated the German to the most dangerous of enemies.**

Roman training and recruitment methods portray the stereotype of the ideal soldier. One of the aspects to Romans elevating the status of the Germanic warrior, rested in this physical image, which painted a fierce and dangerous enemy in a more powerful image than the Roman himself. From Vegetius' account, *The Military Institutions of the Romans*, the importance of physical strength appeared. The Romans favored recruits from rural areas, ideally hunters or those attuned to a harsher outdoor lifestyle for their abilities to adapt to the training and lifestyle of a soldier.¹⁹⁷ **All of these characteristics Rome sought in its soldiers the German barbarians inherently possessed.**¹⁹⁸ In the Roman mindset, could they defeat an enemy that had grown up and prospered his entire life in this environment. Rome sought its soldiers from the very **livelihoods** that all of the Germanic warriors embraced. Rome held just a small portion of

¹⁹⁷Vegetius, 14-16.

¹⁹⁸J .B. Bury, *The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967), 6.

men which met these criteria, whereas all German barbarians embodied these characteristics. This mindset helped mold the Roman mentality, questioning how they could defeat an enemy raised from youth in this image.

The previous section mentioned the German's inability to conduct siege warfare as their culture lacked cities and thus a need to conduct sieges. Surely, the Germanic lifestyle with a lack of cities and major centers frustrated the Romans in planning both before and after 9 A.D. This lack of cities left the Romans unable to pinpoint decisive legion actions and conduct campaigns to gain the Romans tangible victories. In the Germanic lack of cities, another aspect to the two cultures' differences becomes clear. Romans possessed little economic hold over Germania and its peoples.

Tacitus stated that "silver and gold have been denied them- whether as a sign of divine favour or of divine wraith."¹⁹⁹ Monetary forms of currency, such as gold and silver did not set status in Germanic society as it did in Rome. A German's abilities as a strong warrior portrayed his tribal position to a greater degree than the amount of gold or silver a German possessed. Again this builds on the Roman fear that they cannot reason with (or buy off) a future threat on their border or in Rome itself from an enemy that does not understand the importance of silver and gold. This continued to increase the Roman perceived level of threat.

Other descriptions given by Tacitus also support the lack of emphasis on precious metals, such as in the Germanic view of amber, "like true barbarians, they have never asked or discovered what it is or how it is produced. For a long time indeed, it lay unheeded like any other refuse of the sea, until Roman luxury made its reputation. They

¹⁹⁹Tacitus, *The Germania*, 104.

have no use for it themselves. They gather it crude, pass it on in un-worked clumps, and are astounded at the price it fetches.”²⁰⁰ Other Germanic tribes stood even farther from Roman standards. The interior tribes did not even use any monetary methods, but relied solely on a system of barter.²⁰¹

The Romans felt they truly faced an incomprehensible culture. A Germanic culture that lacked all of Rome’s fundamental viewpoints; Rome possessed disciplined and logical soldiers who fought in open battle. Rome also held the strength of the city center and forum and Rome prospered with lands, trade and currency. The Germans lacked all of these Roman societal fundamentals and thus the Romans viewed the Germans as truly dangerous. In turn, the Roman’s perception elevated and overestimated the threat of the Germanic barbarian.

Consequences of the Overestimation

These contrasting cultures create greater distance between Rome and the Germanic barbarians, more than any other enemy Rome faced. The Roman image of the Parthian never contrasted Roman society to the extent of the Germanic barbarians. Parthians possessed city centers, fought open battles, and ruled with a large bureaucratic government. The Parthians, though a greater actual offensive military threat to Rome, never reached a similar status to the Germanic barbarian because of the Parthian image in the Roman mindset. The Romans accepted the risks of continued expansion into Parthia,

²⁰⁰Tacitus, *The Germania*, 139.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 105.

feeling they could defeat the Parthians, unlike that of Germania where the Romans never attempted to permanently re-establish themselves.²⁰²

Tacitus portrayed the new Germanic image well, “The valor and freedom of the Germans is a far more dangerous foe than the power of the despot of the Parthian king.”²⁰³ Caesar’s critique of a German weakness (their lack of discipline) had re-invented itself in the opposite light of a post-Teutoburg Roman world where this “freedom” now portrayed a German strength. The Roman mindset no longer viewed Roman discipline as clearly superior (which under Caesar’s army easily defeated the undisciplined Germanic valor). The image had been cast and the perception of the elevated status of the Germanic barbarian had been cemented. This overestimation of the Germanic barbarian in the Roman mindset helped create the first truly significant results of a Roman military loss and it was from the Emperor Augustus’ post-Teutoburg policies that this mindset took shape.

Augustus and Teutoburg

This section examines the reaction of Augustus and his advisors to Teutoburg. His cultural misunderstanding of the Germans caused him to institute poor policy decisions following Teutoburg, such as conscription and legionnaire extensions. His reactions played an immense role in creating and cementing the new Roman mindset of the elevated Germanic barbarian.

²⁰²These risks included extended campaigns to the East, where the environment and distance both brought additional difficulties in the forms of disease, logistics, and communications. Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 68.

²⁰³Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 144.

The Roman army increased in size from the time of Augustus and 325,000 soldiers to 450,000 by 235 A.D.²⁰⁴ Yet these increases never led to a conquest of Germania. This leads to the question of why. Why did the Roman mindset shift so dramatically as a result of Teutoburg, and not after battles such as Cannae or Carrhae, where the Romans suffered significantly higher numbers of losses? A possible answer lies in Augustus' policy decisions following Teutoburg combined with the unique nature of the Germanic barbarian. Augustus changed the Roman mindset through his cultural misunderstanding of the Germanic barbarians and cemented this mindset permanently through his post-Teutoburg policies.

Cassius Dio described Augustus' reaction to Teutoburg, "[he] rent his garments, as some report, and mourned greatly . . . because of his fear for the German and Gallic provinces and particularly because he expected that the enemy would march against Italy and against Rome itself."²⁰⁵ Augustus' cultural misunderstanding of the Germans impacted Rome more than Varus. Augustus displayed this misunderstanding immediately following Teutoburg, as he feared an invasion of Rome itself. Augustus and his advisors overestimated the strength of the German barbarians, when he speculated that the Germans possessed the capabilities to invade Rome.

The Germans did not possess the capacity to defeat the Romans in open battle, nor did they possess the abilities to conduct sieges. After Varus' slaughter, the German army moved to the Roman camp of Aliso, where German attempts to breach the camp

²⁰⁴Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 112.

²⁰⁵Dio, 51.

failed as Roman archers lined the walls supported by ballistae.²⁰⁶ Cassius Dio also noted the Germanic inability to conduct siege warfare in his comments following Teutoburg, “Yet they found themselves unable to reduce this fort, because they did not understand the conduct of sieges.”²⁰⁷ Though simplistic in his statement, Dio expressed that the Germans lacked the organization necessary to conduct sieges. German warfare itself never required the need to carry out sieges because of the lack of German fortifications.²⁰⁸

Augustus and his advisors also failed in their cultural examination of the region and completely left out of Roman decision making the strength and effects of third party nations. After the victory at Teutoburg, Arminius went to war against another barbarian leader east of the Rhine, Maroboduus.²⁰⁹ Arminius understood his people’s strengths as well as the Germanic inability, such as conducting sieges or meeting the Romans in

²⁰⁶Murdoch, 121-122. Ballistae, a form of Roman artillery, launched bolts and stones, firing these missiles of 25kg distances up to 500 M. The archeological site of the Roman **camp of Aliso** has yet to be located. Scholars believe the camp to be **near the River Lippe and some believe Aliso synonymous with the location of Haltern**. Lucius Caedicius, the Roman commander of Aliso, truly possessed the pre-Teutoburg mentality of Roman superiority and an un-elevated opinion of the Germanic barbarian. A strong Roman leader, he remained calm throughout the attack. He gathered his German prisoners, walked them around his store rooms and then cut off their hands. He finally sent them free, out to their attacking German comrades to speak of the strength of Roman supplies and express that the Romans could hold out. Since with the Germanic inability to conduct sieges, the Germans could only hope to starve the Romans out. Murdoch, 122-123.

²⁰⁷Dio, 49.

²⁰⁸This is also supported by Tacitus’ statement, “it is a well-known fact that the peoples of Germany never live in cities . . . they dwell apart . . . they do not even make use of stones or wall-tiles.” Tacitus, *The Germania*, 114-115. The archeological and modern historical evidence reveals the truth in Tacitus description, a German 1st century A.D. environment that possessed no cities or towns, only scattered villages that supported themselves through stock-raising more than agricultural farming. Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 130. A better examination and understanding of Germanic cultures of this time period, which do not focus around cities, makes it apparent that the Germans never had a need to engage in this type of warfare against each other. Therefore, the Germans would be incapable to do so against Rome. Not only was Rome’s capital under no serious threat of an Arminius-led Germanic invasion in the 1st century A.D., there could be no significant threat to even the border of the Rhine at locations properly fortified.

²⁰⁹Wells, 207.

open battle, much better than the Romans did. Therefore, Arminius chose to advance the other direction and go to battle against another barbarian opponent that his Germanic tribes stood a much better chance of successfully defeating, in the hopes of continuing to strengthen his position and power within the region.²¹⁰ Rome failed to examine this region properly and take into account these additional players in the Roman world, and thus wrongly deducted that Arminius' sole course of action rested in attacking Rome.

Augustus and his advisors also did not give due consideration to the complexities of a venture against Rome logistically, a complex military feat that Augustus gave the Germans more credit than they actually possessed. Caesar's, *The Conquest of Gaul*, provided repeated emphasis on the importance of logistics during this time and in this region. Caesar continually stressed his detailed logistical planning to ensure food was received from regional allies, allowing him to support his army.²¹¹

A basic understanding of the difficulties that went with supporting an army logistically in the 1st century A.D. also appears through an examination of the Roman army. As with all tasks the Roman army set out to accomplish, they followed strict procedures, from the establishment of the Roman camp (shown in chapter 3) to their logistical support. A Roman legion required sixty-six tons of wheat per month to sustain itself, and the horses of a cavalry unit fifty tons of barely per month.²¹² In this

²¹⁰Particularly Rome and its advisors rest at fault for not keeping themselves aware of larger third party nations/tribal groups, such as Maroboduus, who Velleius Paterculus listed as leading a highly trained army of 70,000 troops and 4,000 cavalry. Paterculus, 275.

²¹¹Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 287.

²¹²Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 97. This quantity of food required to support an army is only one consideration on the details of logistical movement of 1st century A.D. armies. Multiple others exist such as the large quantities of wagons and pack animals to transport supplies (for example, the Romans required 1 mule per 8 legionnaires). Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 289.

sustainment category alone, the German army would have had a near impossible time maintaining just feeding their army as they marched through unknown Roman lands without any logistical planning and attempted to conduct an offensive campaign while unable to siege or meet the Romans in open battle.

The Germans, however, possessed only a rudimentary logistical system that could field an army for a limited time period.²¹³ The Germans carried all their supplies, either themselves or by means of their women and slaves when they set out to battle.²¹⁴ Finally, compound these observations with the fact that Romans transported much of their logistical needs utilizing river accesses (note the locations of earlier Roman settlements along and east of the Rhine on the Rivers Lippe and Lahn for ease of supply and support-see figure 2). Arminius' German tribes possessed no such capability. They had no boats, no navigation skills, or maintenance capabilities to repair them. A German scenario of an extended campaign through Roman territory proved an impossibility in the 1st century A.D. Yet Arminius did not consider a campaign into Rome because he recognized the Germanic shortfalls. He could not conduct sieges, meet the Romans in open battle, nor did he possess the logistical means to successfully conduct an offensive campaign against Rome.

Augustus and his advisors misread the cultural situation in Germania and also failed to take into account the internal feuds between German tribes and even within each tribe itself. Amongst Arminius' own clan there always remained a pro-Roman group. Even Arminius' own brother, Flavus, stayed loyal to Rome after 9 A.D., rising from

²¹³Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 51.

²¹⁴Tacitus, *The Germania*, 107 and Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War 100 BC – AD 200*, 51.

private to centurion and retiring in Rome after losing an eye in a later Roman campaign with Tiberius.²¹⁵ Another example of the lack of tribal solidarity rests in Arminius' own death, murdered by his fellow Cherusci. In 21 A.D, as Tacitus reported, "[Arminius] began to aim at kingship, and found himself in conflict with the independent temper of his countrymen. His tribesmen attacked and killed him, fallen at the treacherous hands of his relatives."²¹⁶ Arminius' own family's alliances and his death both help demonstrate the complexities of the German tribal system and the difficulties of permanently uniting multiple clans of German barbarians on a larger scale or for an extended period. Add to this Arminius' young age, twenty-six at the time of Teutoburg and that Arminius had only returned to his tribe in 7 A.D. after years away from his homeland in the service of the Roman army and Arminius' difficulties in uniting the Germans become apparent.²¹⁷ These were all signs that Arminius never had the opportunities to cement the unity necessary to lead a prolonged campaign against Rome in 9 A.D.

Yet even if Augustus and his advisors possessed no detailed information about Arminius or the reasons behind Varus' defeat, the Romans failed to examine the nature of Germanic society itself. This examination would have shown Rome the difficulties of maintaining the sustained Germanic tribal unity necessary to conduct an extended offensive campaign against the Romans. The knowledge of multiple Germanic tribes, with their constant tribal and inter-tribal feuding, should have led Augustus and his advisors to recognize the difficulties ahead of any German leader to hold consolidated

²¹⁵Murdoch, 85-92.

²¹⁶Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 208.

²¹⁷Murdoch, 87 and Fuller, 247.

power in the region. A basic understanding of this would have allowed Augustus to better gauge the level of threat which the Germans posed to Rome.

These key factors: the Germans not being able to beat the Romans in open battles, their inability to conduct sieges, the Roman disregard of other regional players, such as Maroboduus, the German inability to supply an extended campaign against Rome, and the complexities of Germanic tribal relations and consolidation of power; all appear unexamined by Augustus and his advisors.²¹⁸ This obscured Augustus' vision on the level of Germanic threat and in turn produced unsound Roman policies following Teutoburg.

Augustus' Post Teutoburg Policies

The above examination demonstrates that Rome faced no danger of a Germanic invasion in 9 A.D., as the Germans did not possess the capabilities to begin a conquest against Rome. Therefore, Augustus' reaction to Teutoburg rested on his misunderstanding of his enemy more than on any decisions cemented from fact, history, or reason. Augustus' cultural misunderstanding caused him to declare a state of emergency immediately, massing troops along the Rhine for an attack that never came.²¹⁹ The attack never came due to the previous mentioned reasons, but this produced dramatic effects in Rome and helped shape Rome's mindset of the Germanic barbarians.

²¹⁸While one cannot fault Augustus or his advisors for not knowing the details of Teutoburg, Arminius, or Varus' faults; the factors listed above go beyond a battlefield event. These factors encompass general observations of the 1st century Germanic society. Particularly with Germania being on Rome's frontier and with Rome's interactions with them over sixty years (from Caesar's first contact with the Germans to the Teutoburg massacre), Rome should have more thoroughly examined them as Rome shaped its Germanic policy.

²¹⁹Murdoch, 125.

Augustus immediately instituted conscription. Cassius Dio stated, “when no men of military age showed a willingness to be enrolled, he made them draw lots, depriving of his property and disfranchising every fifth man of those still under thirty five and every tenth among those who had passed that age.”²²⁰ Augustus’ decision to conscript proved significant because it showed his severe reaction to what he perceived a great and real threat. Conscription only occurred twice under Augustus, the first being in Pannonia three years earlier in 6 A.D.²²¹ The draft clearly elevated the threat of the Germanic barbarians and in turn elevated their status over other threats. Augustus, through multiple policy decisions, from increasing legions and fortifications along the Rhine to instituting the draft, modified the Roman mindset of the Germanic barbarians.

The response from the Roman people to Augustus’ 9 A.D. conscription demonstrated their increased unwillingness to accept additional sacrifice in a conflict along Rome’s frontier with Germania. Conscription hit the mindset of the Roman people harder than any other decision of Augustus regarding the Germanic barbarians because it required tremendous sacrifice. In Cassius Dio’s above statement, those numbers equal 20 percent of the Roman male fighting population under 35 and 10 percent over 35. These high percentages of conscription directly impacted the Roman citizen and his mindset dramatically. Truly a great enemy would have to exist for Rome’s emperor to have to resort to such drastic measures. This elevated strength of the Germanic barbarian

²²⁰Dio, 51.

²²¹Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 76. Pannonia comprised the modern region of Hungary and parts of Austria and Slovenia, where local leaders attacked and attempted to drive out Roman presence in a rebellion that required three years for Rome to quell. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 79 and 105.

paralleled Rome's increased unwillingness to expand the empire further east across the Rhine at greater costs.

Cassius Dio further described Roman reaction to the 9 A.D. draft, "Finally as a great many paid no heed to him [Augustus] even then, he put some to death."²²² The fact that Augustus had to resort to killing fellow Romans in order to uphold control and discipline of the Empire speaks loudly to the people's discontent with his response to Teutoburg. If the price of a Roman Germanic province east of the Rhine meant conscription and greater cost to Rome, these were too much for Rome's citizens. Romans began to form the mentality that east of the Rhine should remain German.

Augustus' Policies in Roman Historical Context

The Teutoburg massacre came at a critical time for the Roman people and its Empire. The Roman people only celebrated five days of triumph against a Pannonian revolt that lasted three years when news of the Teutoburg disaster reached Rome.²²³ Surely, this rested heavily on the Roman mindset. The Pannonia uprising created the first imperial conscription of troops and three years later, Teutoburg the second.²²⁴ The Roman people must have been asking themselves how much longer until the third. Their anti-conscription actions suggest they longed for the days of the Republic, if the results of this Roman Empire presented only problems, defeats, continued loss of lives, and

²²²Dio, 51.

²²³Paterculus, 297.

²²⁴The first Pannonian conscription demonstrates the Roman will toward conquest beginning to falter as anti-conscription sentiment was high and Augustus resorted to freeing slaves and placing in special units, which aided his efforts and increased Roman manpower on the Pannonian frontier. Adrian Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare* (London, England: Orion Books Ltd, 2000), 119.

multiple conscriptions. Conquest had reached too high a price for them. The people's discontent echoed further through individual instances of reaction to Augustus' 9 A.D. conscription. One of the many attempts to avoid enlistment resulted in Augustus himself selling into slavery an equestrian who sliced off the thumbs of his sons in order to make them unfit for military service.²²⁵

This suggests Augustus and his advisors initially failed to recognize the extent of unpopularity among the Roman people with this conscription. Romans, a conservative people, felt particularly threatened by Augustus' conscription.²²⁶ Roman social structure saw a great deal of change in this period and just one example lay with the influx of slaves created by Roman expansions.²²⁷ These rapid changes and unease still rested in many of the Romans who Augustus now mandated to serve in the Roman army. Many of these Romans would not do so willingly. The second draft of 9 A.D. took the people of Rome's support away from additional conquests. Augustus' policies following Teutoburg halted the Roman Empire and drew Rome's first permanent defensive boundary.

Augustus instituted additional policy decisions that continued to increase the level of tension between Augustus and his people. He created additional resentment among his veterans by both re-enlisting retired legionaries and extending the retirement for active

²²⁵Goldsworthy, *Complete Roman Army*, 76.

²²⁶To highlight just one instance of Roman conservative roots over 300 years in their history; from 367 B.C. to 46 B.C. the Romans held 640 counsel positions and only 21 of these came to be held by *novus homo* (new men/ men without family ancestry). The dates 367 B.C. to 46 B.C. marked the period between the start of Rome allowing both plebeians and patricians to run for Roman consulship (367 B.C.) to when Julius Caesar began choosing his own counsuls (46 B.C.). Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 45.

²²⁷Harl, *Book 1 of 3*, 48.

duty legionaries, which originally set at 20 years, stretched to 25 and even 30 years, with the Emperor's unwillingness to release veterans defending the Rhine at Cologne.²²⁸ One post-Teutoburg instance involved the Roman commander Germanicus. When on campaign he had his hand taken from him by a legionnaire. The legionnaire thrust the commander's hand into his mouth, so Germanicus could feel the man's toothless gums.²²⁹ Other legionnaires along the Rhine also protested their extensions by displaying their broken limbs to Germanicus.²³⁰ These accounts highlight the unpopularity and poor morale that grew in Rome's veterans as a result of Augustus' extension policies.

Yet other negative factors also arose as a result of Augustus' unwise and unnecessary policy decisions. For example, Rome's conscription brought in a large number of soldiers not suited for a military lifestyle.²³¹ This created a reduction in soldier quality during this period of conscription. Conscription also created second and third order effects such as commander's increased difficulties maintaining order. Murdoch went so far as to list one of the purposes of Germanicus' 14 A.D, campaign as, "it was all about keeping control of his own forces. Let the soldiers take out their aggression on the Germans rather than on each other or senior command."²³² Truly going to war for such reasons obscures concrete strategic objectives and shows the delicate line

²²⁸Dio, 51 and Murdoch, 133.

²²⁹Murdoch, 134.

²³⁰Ibid.

²³¹Ibid., 132.

²³²Murdoch, 136.

Augustus and Germanicus attempted to walk in order to maintain order within their own army and Rome as a result of the emperor's Teutoburg policies.

These difficulties all combined to create a delicate and difficult situation for Augustus to balance, and with which he struggled to handle as he continued his post-9 A.D. policies; particularly through limited follow-on campaigns involving the Germans. Rome attacked east of Rhine after 9 A.D., but for purposes much different than the pre-Teutoburg vision of turning Germania into another province. The Romans attacked as a demonstration of their strength and to persuade Germans not to cross the Rhine as well as to accomplish other limited goals such as the capture of Arminius' pregnant wife, Thusnelda and the recovery of legionary eagles.²³³

Cassius Dio gave the following description of the 11 A.D. campaign, "Tiberius and Germanicus invaded Germany and overran portions of it. They did not win any battle however, since no one came to close quarters with them, nor did they reduce any tribe; for in their fear in falling victims to a fresh disaster, they did not advance very far beyond the Rhine."²³⁴ Thus, Rome held reservations about going back across the Rhine. The image of Teutoburg still hung heavily in the Roman mindset and therefore they did not advance far, only far enough to make known to the Germanic barbarians that Roman presence and strength still held west of the Rhine. Dio's description also revealed other aspects, the difficulty and frustration Rome experienced dealing with a Germanic barbarian who would not engage them in open combat.

²³³Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 204.

²³⁴Cassius Dio, 55.

Velleius Paterculus gave Tiberius' post-Teutoburg campaign into Germania some accolades opening military roads, devastating fields and burning houses.²³⁵ However, the archeological evidence does not support his account. No traces of roads have been found to date and no signs of charcoal layers normally found with widespread settlement burning appear in the geological or archeological records.²³⁶ This evidence suggests that Velleius Paterculus exaggerated the accomplishments of the follow-on campaign meant solely to persuade the Germans to remain east of the Rhine. Murdoch also argued these post-Teutoburg limited campaigns proved to be the worst decisions Rome could have made, for not only did they lack tangible objectives, such as a conquest and assimilation of lands, but they only continued to solidify Germanic opposition against them, achieving what Arminius failed to do on his own.²³⁷ Again this speaks to Rome culturally misunderstanding its enemy and enacting a costly military course of action that proved counterproductive to the results the Romans wished to achieve.

For the first time in their history, Roman campaigns themselves changed. Roman campaigns across the Rhine after 9 A.D. did not involve the ultimate goal of conquest and assimilation. Rome made no attempt to rule the lands east of the Rhine permanently after Teutoburg and this also becomes apparent in the archeological evidence. Rome never reoccupied the pre-Teutoburg sites at Waldgirmes or Haltern after 9 A.D.

²³⁵Paterculus, 305.

²³⁶Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 202.

²³⁷Murdoch, 139.

(referenced in Chapter 2.)²³⁸ Nor have new post 9 A.D. Roman settlements been discovered to date in Germania east of the Rhine.

The fact that the Romans never re-established these settlements indicates that their intentions in Germania changed focus. The Romans at the settlement of Haltern never returned to claim their treasures they had temporarily buried.²³⁹ They had every intention to reclaim them once Haltern and this rebellion quieted down. But Teutoburg and Augustus' policies changed the Roman mindset and in turn the Romans abandoned the idea of returning east of the Rhine to re-establish settlements like Haltern. On the few occasions the Romans crossed east of the Rhine after 9 A.D., it would be with an army. The effort would have a limited military purpose, with no aim of conquest. The ideas of trade, growth, and prosperity of the pre-9 A.D. Roman settlements east of the Rhine vanished with Teutoburg.

Augustus set in motion policies which established Germania as a region beyond Roman control. Augustus cemented a mindset of Germania and its barbarians that continued to grow in strength. Tacitus wrote of Rome and its Germanic foes, "But the more recent 'victories' claimed by our commanders have been little more than excuses for celebrating triumphs."²⁴⁰ Tacitus' bold statement struck directly at the Emperor and Rome, the temporary military expeditions into Germania after the Teutoburg loss served as ultimately hollow campaigns with no tangible benefits, since they were not with the intention of permanently assimilating Germania.

²³⁸Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 104 and Murdoch, 121.

²³⁹Wells, 103.

²⁴⁰Tacitus, *The Germania*, 132.

Augustus the Emperor and Teutoburg

Augustus served Rome as an immensely capable Emperor. He sat as Rome's sole ruler for forty-four years.²⁴¹ This makes his cultural misunderstanding of Germania and his elevation of the Germanic barbarian in the eyes of the Roman people even more pronounced. From his earliest days, he had created victories, such as at Actium, ending civil war (and a republican government) while establishing peace in Rome.²⁴² He boasted "I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of Marble."²⁴³ Augustus doubled the size of the Roman world.²⁴⁴ Therefore, because of these accomplishments, the Teutoburg massacre hit him like no other event in his life.

Augustus' biographer Suetonius wrote that Augustus wept for months, "Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!"²⁴⁵ For Augustus, Teutoburg smashed his dream of continued Roman expansion. After 9 A.D. Augustus set in place the actions he felt necessary to uphold his Empire, reactions which included the conscription, extension of veteran service terms and the military buildup along the Rhine discussed previously. Augustus post-Teutoburg actions of conscription also suggest he first planned to continue forward and conquer Germania yet he then recognized Rome's will incapable of the sacrifice necessary to continue east of the Rhine. Thus, he drastically changed Roman policy and established a defensive. That is why Varus' defeat crushed him. The Roman

²⁴¹Dio, 55.

²⁴²Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 94.

²⁴³Dio, 69.

²⁴⁴Harl, *Book 2 of 3*, 94.

²⁴⁵Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 202.

mindset would not accept the additional sacrifices necessary to make Germania a Roman province. The gain was not worth the sacrifices in the eyes of the Roman people.

Augustus' expansion of the Roman Empire ended in 9 A.D.

Teutoburg impacted Augustus so severely, that upon his death in 14 A.D. he left his Injunctions and Commands for Tiberius and the Public which included, "He [Augustus] advised them to be satisfied with their present possessions and under no conditions to wish to increase the empire to any greater dimension. . . . It would be too hard to guard, he said, and this would lead to danger of their losing what was already theirs."²⁴⁶ The emperor here set, for the first time in Rome's history, a defensive mindset. And while his words would not be heeded entirely, and the Roman Empire would continue to expand for another 200 years, it never established that empire east of the Rhine into Germania. Even at Augustus' death, his actions elevated the Germanic barbarian in the mindset of the Roman people. The German barbarians humbled the mighty Roman Empire to an extent that their emperor decreed to establish a **defensive** barrier. A conquest of Germania came at too high a price for Rome.

Augustus' cultural misunderstanding of his Germanic foe established his post Teutoburg actions. Augustus overreacted to Varus' defeat and took the loss out of context with Germanic abilities. This caused him to institute unwise and unnecessary policy decisions, from conscription to an extension of veteran mandatory service lengths. These actions constructed and solidified an elevated status of the Germanic barbarian in the eyes of the Roman people; a new status from which Rome never recovered. Had Augustus been more culturally aware of his Germanic foe he would have asked himself,

²⁴⁶Dio, 69.

“How could the Germans possibly lead a united effort against the Roman army in open battle and sieges and march through Rome maintaining this army successfully?” He would have found no answer, because Germanic barbarians possessed no such abilities. Augustus truly feared a Germanic invasion. But if he had taken the above considerations into account, he may have acted more moderately and not have created such lasting effects on the Roman Empire.

Yet the Roman people’s discontent with his post–Teutoburg policies coupled with his own desire to stay in power suggest the ultimate reasoning behind his actions. Augustus enacted harsh policies following Teutoburg, such as conscription, to continue Roman conquest of Germania. Yet the fact that those campaigns turned to limited objectives and not conquest suggests he recognized the loss of Roman will and shifted strategic focus. For Augustus may have begun to recognize the internal threat to losing his Empire following Teutoburg. Augustus’ actions demonstrate not only a fear from the German threat but from inside Rome as well. Augustus’ post-Teutoburg policy choice of halting conquest suggest he feared the Roman Senate and felt a necessity to focus of his own consolidation of power.

Teutoburg decreased Rome’s legions from 28 to 25.²⁴⁷ Particularly following a military loss of three legions, Augustus may have been worried about the reaction from Rome’s Senate. The Senate saw to the assassination of his adoptive father (Julius

²⁴⁷The Emperor Augustus originally decreased the number of legions from sixty to twenty-eight following civil war when he had become Emperor. Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 50. This action is suggestive of Augustus feeling the necessity to consolidate power and avoid another future civil war. Yet, in order to obtain enhanced security with fewer legions now all loyal to Augustus and reap the financial gains of the Empire maintaining a smaller force, Augustus increased the importance of each one of his twenty-eight legions. Losing three legions from twenty-eight now rested at a significantly higher importance than from the original sixty before he had become emperor. This played an increased impact on the Roman mindset as well.

Caesar) in 44 B.C. and this fact may have effected Augustus to an even greater degree following a Roman military loss (an advantageous time to spark discontent with an Emperor).

Augustus' policies throughout his reign demonstrate his fear of a Roman political rival. He always kept a tight hold on positions which involved control of Roman legions. Augustus rarely let these positions go to members outside of his family and Williams listed "nepotism a corner-stone of his [Augustus'] policy."²⁴⁸ However, because of Augustus' decrease to Roman senatorial military control, blame for Teutoburg fell directly upon Augustus.²⁴⁹ Teutoburg weakened Augustus and he needed a successful response.

Yet, Augustus was not a general, like his adoptive father. This may have caused him even greater fear to his control of power following a military loss. He followed the historical Roman example and attempted to raise additional legions to return and conquer Germania. Yet because of the Roman people's discontent with his post-Teutoburg policies, coupled with the unique nature of his Germanic foe (which did not allow quick open battle victories), Augustus recognized Rome's inability to make quick progress east of the Rhine. Augustus realized the gains to his Empire by adding Germania did not compare to the costs this endeavor required in Roman manpower, finances and Roman opposition. He recognized his need to shift focus to the internal control of Rome. He also understood to continue this control required a shift of resources and a drastic change to Roman policy which stopped additional frontier conquest. This policy set the Roman

²⁴⁸Williams, 91.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 102.

Empire's first permanent boundary. Inflating the threat of the Germanic barbarian would only assist Augustus in establishing and maintaining the Rhine boundary.

Teutoburg broke a Roman way of life that placed success around the ability to conquest and assimilate. Augustus recognized all this in his response to the Teutoburg loss. This explains why he went to such drastic measures (draft, extensions) to attempt to continue to shape Germania after the 9 A.D. defeat and then modified his strategic aim and halted conquest to maintain his own power.

He realized the massacre directly attacked Rome's foundation of success; Roman ability to conquest and assimilate. This, at the same time, attacked Augustus' control of power. But when the Roman people proved unwilling to accept such sacrifices, Augustus also recognized the destruction of Roman success east of the Rhine and his need to shift Rome to establish a defense against the Germans while maintaining control of his power in Rome. Teutoburg destroyed Rome's ability to continue their expansion and Augustus stood humbled and scarred by this fact.

Varus' lack of cultural understanding of the Germans cost him three of Rome's legions and his life. Augustus' cultural misunderstanding of the Germanic barbarians set Rome on a path, which ultimately elevated the status of Germanic barbarians and set a new Roman mindset, which created the first permanent defensive border in Roman history.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The Roman response to a military loss before the massacre at Teutoburg (9 A.D.) showed the Romans unite in will and conduct follow-on campaigns which conquered their foe and his territories. The battle at Cannae (216 B.C) set this Roman mindset (of unity of will and conquest) following a Roman military defeat to Carthage, as Rome expanded to dominate the Mediterranean world. This mindset cemented in Rome and carried over to Rome's frontier policies. One hundred and fifty years later, this Roman mindset provided a mirrored response (of Roman unity and conquest) which occurred after the Romans suffered a military defeat to the Parthians at Carrhae (53 B.C.).

Both Roman loses resulted in more than two and three times higher Roman casualties than at Teutoburg, yet these battles did not possess the strategic repercussions of Teutoburg. While all previous Roman military loses before 9 A.D. were merely military setbacks (as they did not impact Roman policy or Rome's direction to continue its conquests), the massacre at Teutoburg was Rome's first military defeat. Teutoburg established Rome's first permanent defensive boundary and elevated the status of the Germanic foe because of Rome's cultural misunderstandings on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

Before Teutoburg, Roman writers portrayed Rome on the path of expansion and assimilation of lands and peoples east of the Rhine. Caesar in particular carried Roman sentiment that the Germanic barbarian held no special status among Roman foes and that the Germans could not impact future Roman conquest into Germania. The archeological evidence on the Rhine and east of the river also attested to this expansion, until 9 A.D. when Teutoburg halted and reversed this direction.

The massacre in the Teutoburg forest proved a pivot point in Roman history, which shifted Roman policy and established Rome's first permanent defensive. This massacre occurred based on the actions of two commanders, Varus and Arminius and both of their backgrounds played a role in the Teutoburg outcome. Arminius held a strong knowledge of Roman military tactics through his years as a Roman auxiliary officer, which aided in his preparation of the Teutoburg ambush. Yet Varus, though with a solid background of service in the East and North Africa, did not understand the culture and environment in which he commanded in Germania. This brought upon devastating results in the Teutoburg forest.

United States Marine Colonel Thomas X. Hammes stated, "Any nation that assumes it is inherently superior to another is setting itself up for disaster."²⁵⁰ This statement, although applied to modern warfare, proves to be equally relevant when examining history of 2000 years ago. Varus held his Roman forces to such a level of superiority that he disregarded the abilities of the Germanic tribes as he marched into the Teutoburg forest.

Varus also poorly assessed the cultural situation of his enemy before his march. He and his advisors failed to examine the economic or political atmosphere in his operating area. Varus also failed to compare his Germania assignment to historical examples (such as Gaul and Spain) where Rome learned assimilation lessons such as the hesitance of native populations to accept and adjust to these taxations and changes. Had

²⁵⁰Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), ix.

he examined this situation he would have been more likely to re-evaluate his force protection posture and particularly the security on his Teutoburg march.

But Varus and his advisors failed to examine the natural animosities and challenges that came with new Roman conquest. They failed to properly gage the potential Germanic reactions from the Roman *Lex Provinciae* and the new Roman taxations. Particularly against a Germanic enemy whose culture had never revolved around the city (Rome's forum structure) and historically was a group with a long history of freedom from outside influence; Varus should have recognized the necessity to proceed with Roman changes slowly and systematically.

Yet Varus' actions in the Teutoburg suggest he failed to examine these cultural factors, over-trusting in Arminius' friendship and over-reliant in his Germanic auxiliaries (who performed critical roles on this march such as advanced party scouting). He conducted his march into the Teutoburg forest in an open formation, highly susceptible to ambush. This greatly limited his legions capability to establish a defensive position.

This loss also suggests Varus failed to adjust to the terrain and the weather as he encountered critical decision points along his march. This failure to adjust negated Roman strengths on this march, such as the cavalry. These weaknesses presented the opportunity for a formidably skilled adversary, Arminius, to trap the Romans at the ideal ambush site he prepared in Teutoburg.

Yet the loss at Teutoburg brought on unparalleled consequences in comparison to any other previous military loss in the Roman world. Roman fortifications were doubled along the Rhine and legionary troops there were increased to eight legions (twice as large as any other Roman frontier posting). Roman settlements east of the Rhine were never

re-occupied. Rome drew its first permanent defensive lines in its history along the Rhine. Teutoburg created a new Roman concept; the **first** permanent limit to the Roman Empire had been drawn. This change to the Roman mindset resulted from both the unique nature of the Germanic barbarian as well as Augustus' post Teutoburg policies and becomes apparent in examining post-Teutoburg Rome.

Tacitus described the newly elevated status of the German barbarian as the most formidable threat, outranking all other Roman enemies. The image of the Germanic barbarian, a unique image which directly contrasted the Roman soldier and Roman society, helped increase the ferocious reputation of the Germanic warrior to an unsound level. Even the Parthians utilized city centers and fought in open battles, which led to more commonalities with Romans versus the truly foreign and dangerous Germanic barbarians. These Germans possessed no such city centers (for the Roman army to assault and to defeat directly and easily) nor did they meet the Romans in open battle. The unique nature of the Germanic barbarian threat countered some of Rome's strengths and this in turn elevated their status in the Roman world.

However, there exists another side to Hammes' statement, a corollary that applies to the Roman scenario in that any nation who assumes his enemy superior will also set itself up for disaster. Varus' mistakes at the tactical and operational levels at Teutoburg led Augustus to enact policies which brought on strategic ramifications like no battle in Roman history. Yet, better analysis of the Germanic world would have given Augustus a clearer understanding of its threat.

Augustus made unsound policy decisions following Teutoburg because of his poor assessments of the Germanic cultural situation. He based his decisions not on a

sound examination of his enemy, but on the sole fact that Germanic barbarians successfully defeated three Roman legions. Augustus and his advisors took this fact out of context and this led to invalid assumptions. Had Augustus and his advisors been more successful in their analysis, the Germanic inability to confront the Romans in open battle or conduct sieges, would have become apparent. Thus, their actual threat beyond smaller-scale attacks would have been revealed. Augustus and his advisors also failed to recognize multiple other factors from Germanic logistical capabilities to other international players (Arminius actually went to war toward the east against another powerful regional player, Maroboduus).

Had Augustus and his advisors examined these factors, they would have recognized that the Teutoburg loss did not create the level of threat for which he forced Rome to sacrifice in preparation. The Roman loss and future Germanic barbarian threat could have been placed in better perspective and allowed Augustus to examine the second and third order effects of establishing such harsh post-Teutoburg policies better. These policies, such as conscription and extension of veteran's service hurt the will of the Roman people following Teutoburg.

Augustus' actions suggest he conscripted to counter the German threat and continue Roman expansion, yet his strategic objectives shifted after he recognized the extent of the Roman people's discontent with his post-Teutoburg policies. Augustus recognized his objectives needed to shift to consolidating and maintaining his power, which speaks to why Rome only conducted campaigns with limited objectives across the Rhine following Teutoburg. The benefits of Germanic conquests did not equal the threat

of a possible internal uprising against Augustus and thus he modified Roman strategic policy.

Other Roman emperors would continue expansion, but never assimilate German peoples and lands east of the Rhine. Augustus' policies following Teutoburg cemented the new and elevated Roman mindset of the Germanic barbarian. Rome would go on to conquer for 200 years, claim Parthian lands, establish themselves in Britain and continue through North Africa; but never assimilate the Germanic lands and peoples east of the Rhine. Yet, even in these areas, Rome would eventually draw further boundaries, such as in Britain, based off the ferocity of their opponent and the economic gains the Romans believed further conquests would bring them. This suggests Teutoburg and Augustus' decisions established a precedent that would draw Rome's additional future borders as its empire continued.

The importance of cultural understanding of one's enemy and the ability to assess one's operating environment remains as essential today as it did for the Romans 2000 years ago. From Varus' tactical and operational levels to the strategic level of Augustus, Rome's leaders failed to correctly identify the Germanic threat and this led to not only the disaster at Teutoburg but also poor policy decisions which affected Rome to an unparalleled level in its history following a Roman defeat. Varus' cultural misunderstanding cost Rome **three** of her legions, but Augustus' cultural misunderstanding created even greater permanent effects. Teutoburg established the **first** permanent defensive in the Roman Empire and proved more significant than any pre-9 A.D. loss in Rome's history. Whereas previous 9 A.D. Roman losses on the battlefield stood as Roman setbacks, Rome's first true military defeat came at the hands of the

Germanic barbarians at Teutoburg. Teutoburg drew the limits of the Roman Empire for the first time in her history.

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